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The Sugar Islands

A CARIBBEAN TRAVELOGUE

BY ALEC WAUGH

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TO
ELDRED CURWEN

*In whose company I visited for the first time
so many of these islands.*

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The Sugar Islands

Introduction to the Caribbean

IT WAS my last evening in New York, a late February evening in 1948. It was cold and bleak. A bitter wind was blowing from the north. Discolored snow littered the gutters of the side streets. I could scarcely believe that in twelve hours' time I should be high over the Caribbean.

"Which islands are you going to?" I was being asked.

"Trinidad, for a week. Then the smaller ones, St. Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, Antigua."

"Is it long since you were there?"

"Nine years."

"Are you expecting to find it changed?"

I shrugged.

"Nine years is a long time, and a good deal's happened. Dominica was cut off throughout the war, so was St. Vincent. St. Lucia and Trinidad became naval bases. There may be changes. That's what I want to see."

"And what are you planning to write, another novel?"

I shook my head.

"This tourist boom in the West Indies won't be confined to Cuba and Jamaica. Some of the people who before the war went to the less fashionable Riviera places—Cassis and Villefranche and Le Levandou—are going, I'm pretty

sure, to be attracted now to the smaller West Indian islands. A lot of people are going to want to travel there; quite a few will want to settle there. I want to write a book that will 'put them in the picture,' that will tell them what to expect as regards the climate, the conditions and the people there, the way things are and why things are how they are; the kind of book, in fact, that I should have liked to have had to read myself when I went there first."

"When did you go there first?"

"In '27."

"What made you go?"

I smiled at that, a little ruefully. It was, incidentally, without premeditation, as part of a quite different plan, that I saw the West Indies first.

In the early summer of 1926, when I was twenty-eight, I set out from London with a round-the-world trip ticket in my pocket, and in view of the difficulty and present cost of travel it may not be impertinent to recall that a ticket which sent me first class round the Mediterranean touching at Greece, Turkey, and the Levant; thence from Port Said via Colombo to Malaya; from Singapore, calling at the Dutch East Indies, to the Australian ports; from Sydney northwards across the Pacific to the New Hebrides, Tahiti, Panama, the West Indies and finally Marseilles; a ticket that included twenty weeks' board and lodging, cost under nine hundred dollars.

For a writer with no responsibilities or overhead expenses, as I was then, large scale travel provided in the 1920's a very economical design for living. It was only indeed because I was traveling half the time that I was able during those years to run a flat and entertain my friends in London. My round-the-world trip, which lasted a full nine

months, cost me in all a bare twenty-five hundred dollars and at no point did I exercise austerity.

I have described that journey in another book, *Hot Countries*, telling how at the first sight of Tahiti I decided, as had so many travelers before, to let my ship sail on without me; telling in the form of fiction how gradually I came to realize that Tahiti, whatever it may have been in the days of Melville, was no place in the 1920's for a young man of ambition to take root in; telling how I decided suddenly, in an afternoon, to get back to England by the quickest and shortest route, across America, not waiting for the French boat by which I had a ticket. I did not tell, however, in *Hot Countries*, how on the way up to San Francisco all my plans for settling permanently in England became reversed and how in the smoke-room of the *Mangani* I made a rendezvous for August in Tahiti.

In June, 1927, I started back for the Pacific. I was traveling by the *Louqsor*, a French seven-thousand-ton converted troopship which carried about sixty mixed-class passengers. She sailed from Marseilles. She was bound for New Caledonia, through the Panama Canal; Tahiti was six weeks away.

At the head of the gangplank a small notice board announced that we were to leave at 11:30 for Pointe à Pitre.

"Where's Pointe à Pitre?" I asked.

"Guadeloupe. It's the chief port there."

But I was not interested in Guadeloupe; I was starting upon a big adventure. Guadeloupe, like Colon, was no more than a station upon a six weeks' journey. I barely knew of its existence, remembering it vaguely from history lessons as one of the islands that kept changing hands during the French wars of the eighteenth century. When the

notice board announced eighteen days later that we would dock on the following afternoon, such anticipation as I felt was no more than the corollary to eighteen landless days. I wanted to feel my feet on concrete; I wanted to loiter before shop windows, to "consult a menu," to patronize "a dancing." It was in that mood that I went ashore; and appropriately enough, the only recordable incident that I can recall about the next ten hours is that I first drank Lanson then.

The next day, however, we docked at Martinique.

It was a cloudless July morning. The sky looked very blue against the gray green tamarinds. The shrubs lining the road down which we sauntered from the quay were studded in pink and white with the bell-mouthed hibiscus. There was a broad, grass-grown savannah flanked with mango trees. In its center was a white statue set about with palms, with royal palms that stood straight and tall like sentries. On two sides of the savannah was the irregular broken skyline of two- and three-storied buildings; clubs and hotels and shops and cafés, some wooden and some brick; some with fresh-painted shutters; others with blistered woodwork and warped frames. On the edge of the grass a succession of one-man stalls offered soft drinks and biscuits.

The tourist season for the Caribbean ends in April. The summer is popularly supposed to be made as intolerable by heat as is the autumn by rain and wind. But I do not remember it as being particularly hot. Everything was bright and gay; there was color and animation along the streets. Many of the women wore the native dress, wide-skirted at the ankles, tight-bodiced, with a silk handkerchief about the shoulders and a smaller silk handkerchief knotted in the hair with the ends pointing upwards. The

French officials looked very dapper and self-important in their white ducks and high-crowned, mushroom-like sun helmets; the mulatto men, very elegant, in their silk shirts and gaudy ties and tight-waisted suits. There was a great deal of noise. Cars were honking at every corner. Range after range of jagged mountains, indented with the pale blue of bay and estuary, rose like a bastion behind the harbor. Over the porch of the Hotel de France the tricolor was flying. There was an air of the Midi about it all. And across the grass, the white statue in its circle of guardian palms gave a dignity and significance to the scene. Whom was it to, I asked.

My question was greeted with a laugh. Had I forgotten that Josephine was born here?

I strolled across to it.

So many pens have described the details of that statue—the long, flowing robes of the First Empire, the high waist, the bare arms and shoulders, the hand resting on a medalion that bears Napoleon's profile, the head turned southwards to the place of her birth, Trois Islets—it has illustrated so many articles that it is hard for the modern traveler to assess its intrinsic value as a work of art. It is hard to dissociate it from its subject; it is hard not to react against its overpraise; it is easy to dismiss it scoffingly as "the kind of thing that you would see in half a hundred cemeteries." Moreover, it is set upon so high a pedestal that it is impossible to get a level and close-up view of it. I have never seen a photograph that did it justice, and it is possible that if you were to see that statue in the Metropolitan, you would consider it of small account. Seen, though, in Martinique, in its own setting from a distance of forty yards, it is not easy to be unmoved by it. As I saw it on that first July morning, white against the green of the

tamarinds and mangoes, it seemed to stand there on its pedestal, in the center of the savannah, in the circle of its palms, as a symbol, as a tribute to the romantic destiny not only of a woman, but of an island's life. "This must be a real place," I thought.

Something always remains out of a love affair. Usually the last thing one would expect. A year ago, a man whom I have known for a quarter of a century, with whom for five or six years I was on terms of quite close friendship and with whom, nowadays, in the course of most years I arrange at least once to lunch or dine, asked me if I had been surprised the first time he invited me to dinner.

It had been in the early '20's. I was four or five years younger than he was. We had nothing very obvious in common. He was a Treasury official. He was not a footballer or a cricketer. As members of the Savile Club, we met casually two or three times a month. There was no particular reason why he should have invited me to a dinner which marked—we could recognize it now in retrospect—the start of our real friendship. Had I been surprised when he invited me? "Yes," I said. "I suppose I was."

He smiled. "You'll be more surprised when I tell you why I did. I had heard that you were a good friend of Phyllis's. I'd just fallen for her crazily. I thought it might do me good to have you saying nice things about me to her. I read in *The Times* this morning that she was a grandmother. I don't suppose I've thought of her ten times in the last fifteen years. It's strange to reflect that our friendship, yours and mine, is the only thing that survives now out of all that emotional disturbance."

We have most of us had, I fancy, an equivalent experience. And as I sat answering an interviewer's questions, on

a cold February evening in 1948, I was forced to remind myself that this abiding link with the West Indies is all that is left alive now in my life of an entanglement on whose account I traveled at the end of the 1920's many thousand miles.

Fifteen months later, I was to remember that July morning in Fort de France. I had been to Tahiti and returned. I had crossed the Atlantic twice. Tahiti had come to seem a very long way off, far further than the nine thousand miles that it was marked on the map as being. I was in need of an impersonal period, a pause in which to think and write, to refresh and recreate myself. I remembered Martinique. It might prove, I thought, a sister island to Tahiti. It was French and in the tropics, as far north of the line as was Tahiti south of it. I might write an article, or even a book, comparing the two islands.

I started with the most vague intentions. I also started in the most complete ignorance of the island's history; of the part that it had played, or for that matter that the West Indies generally had played, in history. As a schoolboy I had been a history specialist; as a schoolboy I had been confronted in form-room after form-room by a map, the quarter of which was painted red; in sermon after sermon, I had been exhorted to remember that the main object of my education was to fit me to be a worthy subject of the British Empire. But I was taught little of that Empire's history. Certainly, I had no idea of how important the Caribbean had been to European statesmen in the eighteenth century nor how much English and French and Spanish blood was shed there. If, when the *Pellerin de la Touche* deposited me at Fort de France on December 17, 1928, an interviewer had asked me what I knew about the

island of which I was to become a resident, I could only have produced three facts: that Martinique figured among the battle honors of my regiment, that Josephine had been born there, and that early in the century a volcano had erupted and destroyed an entire town within a minute. If it is an advantage to bring a fresh mind to a subject, the odds were on me.

I started, as I said, with the most vague intentions. But at the same time I had a quite definite schedule of work ahead. I was halfway through a novel that I planned to finish before my return, and I knew that the first thing I must do on my arrival was to find somewhere quiet in the country. Fort de France would be impossible. There is no atmosphere more restless than that of a tropical port. Its heat, its honking horns, its smells, its radios, its general airlessness, its essential eventlessness are combined distractingly with a feeling of something always being about to happen. In Tahiti I had stayed in a beach hotel, facing Moorea, some ten miles from Papeete. It had a central building, where one took one's meals, with separate cabins spread fifty or so yards away along the shore. It was an ideal place in which simultaneously to carry on with one's own job and to absorb an atmosphere. I hoped to find some equivalent establishment in Martinique.

Heads were shaken, however, when I presented my letters of introduction to the French Line offices. Outside Fort de France, they said, there were no possible hotels. Martinique had no tourist trade.

"Perhaps it has been a mistake of ours," they said, "but as you will see, this island is extremely prosperous. We are part of Metropolitan France. That is to say, we are regarded as a department of France, and our representatives sit in Paris in our equivalent of your House of Commons.

It is the old Roman colonial system. It suits us well. We work in the closest co-operation with Bordeaux. The terms of trade are very advantageous to us. The planters and the business men are making so much money out of rum and sugar that it is not in their interest to invest their capital in hotels and swimming pools. In some of the other islands, in some of your British islands, the links with the mother country are less strong, their products are less protected. You have probably to consider the claims of your other colonies when you arrange your tariffs; that is one of the disadvantages of having so large an empire; certainly some of your smaller islands are in quite real difficulties. They are forced to depend upon their tourist trade. We, fortunately, or in this case unfortunately, are not presented with that necessity. No; we are afraid there is no hotel outside Fort de France."

"Then what about renting a bungalow?" I asked.

They shrugged again. Where, then, would their owners live, since there were no hotels? Why should they want to let their houses unless they were going to take a holiday in Europe, and who in their senses would exchange Martinique for Europe in December?

It sounded logical.

I went round to the British Consul. He, too, shook his head, though he gave a different reason.

"This island's a funny place," he said. "It's owned by six large families. They are immensely rich, but they're self-sufficient. It all dates back to the Revolution. The English happened to be in control here through the Terror, so the French aristocrats didn't get bumped off, as they did in Haiti and Guadeloupe. By the time the English left, the Terror was at an end. But Paris and France had become places that old régime planters hadn't any use for any

longer, so they stayed on here, getting richer and richer, intermarrying, and giving each other vast Sunday lunches. They've kept everything in their hands. They aren't interested in having tourists: why should they be? No; I'm afraid you've come to the wrong place. If you want to stay in the country, I'd try Guadeloupe. There's a very good hotel just above Basse Terre. Guadeloupe's altogether different. It's all owned in France. Yes; I should go there. There'll be a boat sailing, let me see—" He turned towards his secretary. "When will the next boat be sailing, Mary? Friday. Yes; that's what I should do; take that."

And he sat back with a beam upon his face.

The finality of any "no" depends, however, upon the nationality of the man pronouncing it. An American "no" is definitely final. Every American is the heir of immigration. America has a tradition of "welcome to the new arrival." An American will do all he can for the newcomer. If he says "no" it means that he can do nothing. It is of his "yes" that you must be cautious. It may mean no more than "if I can get a chance of doing anything, I will." The Englishman works on a different system; "his home is his castle" and "his word is his bond." He is wary of new acquaintances, and he is anxious not to appear to promise anything that he is not certain that he can perform. These two techniques result in a good many misunderstandings in the trade of letters. American novelists in London imagine that they have been turned down by taciturn and non-committal editors and take their work elsewhere, while English authors, misinterpreting enthusiastic cables from their New York agents, sign leases for larger flats.

In this instance I took as final neither the British Consul's nor the French Line's "no": for the Frenchman works on yet another system. His "no" merely means that he does

not see at a first glance the opening for a private "rake off." I was quite sure that there must be somewhere in Martinique someone who would want to rent a bungalow.

Within two minutes my beliefs were justified. The Consul's secretary was a tall, handsome Martiniquaise, and she spoke in a firm, clear voice.

"I think I can help this gentleman," she said.

Within three days I was established in a bungalow.

It was a very pleasant bungalow, seven miles out of Fort de France on the leeward side. It stood high, to the extent of thirty steps, above the main road. From the road a short, steep path zigzagged through tangled undergrowth to a sandy cove that may well have been one of those on which, a hundred and thirty years before, the Thirty-ninth Regiment of Foot had landed. It faced southwest. Across thirty miles of water I could see upon clear days two cone-shaped mountains, the Pitons of Saint Lucia. It was a four-roomed bungalow with a wide veranda and with servants' premises. I was sharing it with the traveling companion to whom this book is dedicated. We had three servants—a cook, a general scavenger, and a gardener. We lived extremely well. I have forgotten now the exact details of rent and wages. But I do know that our five weeks there were both the most sumptuous and the cheapest in a five months' trip.

We led, Eldred Curwen and myself, an extremely quiet life there. I woke with the sun and by half past six was at work on the veranda, looking out over "the bright blue meadow of a bay," while the life of the island passed in a slow parade below me. I would watch as I wrote the native carrier girls—*les porteuses*, the subject of one of Lafcadio Hearn's loveliest essays—swing down the road with even stride and erect figures, their loads balanced upon their

heads. In the bay beyond fishermen would be setting out their nets in circles; small launches would be busy with coastline traffic between Fort de France and the smaller townships; now and again far on the horizon the white superstructure of a tourist liner or an inter-island cargo boat would gleam and glitter in the sunlight. Usually the sun was shining, though rain of a brief kind was frequent. They were short, fierce, drenching showers. At most hours of the day there would be a rainbow curving over one or another mountain. It was not really hot. There were frequent gusts of wind, so that I needed a paperweight upon my table. In the garden below me bright-winged hummingbirds darted from bush to bush. Over the bungalow walls and over the railings of the veranda, bougainvillea mingled its mauve and briar-red flowers with the bell-mouthed white and scarlet of the hibiscus, and all the time the lights were changing upon the water.

S. N. Behrman once said that if you have done three hours' writing the rest of the day takes care of itself. Certainly in the tropics three hours at a desk is ample. By ten o'clock the sun had mounted. My wrist had become so damp that the ink ran and blurred as my script moved down the page. I would go down to the beach and swim and sunbathe, lunch late and lightly off fish and salad, and almost directly after lunch, to avoid the after-effects of a siesta, start upon a two-hour walk.

It was through very untropical country that we would take that walk. In Martinique there is little of the lush, iridescent greenery of Malaya, none of that riot of creepers and bamboos that I had seen in the teak forests of Siam and that I was to see later in Trinidad and Dominica. The long, rolling fields of sugar cane had a northern look; as had the small allotments—the orchard, the vegetable patch,

the chicken-run—that the peasant proprietors cultivate for their own use. The villages were for the most part along the coast. But the interior was dotted with small cabins and groups of cabins; occasionally with the large, dignified houses of the big estates.

From the decks of a liner, Martinique rises from the sea in a cluster of high peaks like a Marquesan island. But whereas the interior of Tahiti is an impenetrable jungle of trees and undergrowth, so that cultivation is only possible along the coast, Martinique is cut and traversed by a succession of deep and fertile valleys, through which have been driven wide, macadamed roads. It was easy to see, in the course of a two hours' walk, why Martinique was rich.

On our return a Creole* punch was awaiting us—rum with a slice of lime, a half teaspoonful of syrup, ice, and half as much again of water. Bathed and changed, we would sit on the veranda sipping it, watching the sun sink on the horizon, wondering whether we should see during that final second of its emersion the brief and brilliant flicker of the emerald ray. Dusk fell quickly. Fireflies would float about the flowers. We dined at seven. By half past eight I was asleep.

It was a quiet enough routine, with only the occasional break, for the sake mainly of variety, of a day in Fort de France, but gradually, leading that routine, I became aware of the differences between this island and Tahiti.

There were many differences.

There was no leisure: that was the first thing I noticed. No one in Tahiti was ever busy. There was no need for

*NOTE: I have used the word "Creole" throughout in what I believe to have been its original meaning of native to the Caribbean. It bears no relation to color. There can be white, quarter-white and full-black Creoles.

work. The valleys are full of fruit, of oranges and bread-fruit, bananas and mangoes and papaya. You have only to shake them down. The streams are full of shrimps and fish, waiting to be speared. There are land crabs and there are pineapples. If you are thirsty, there is the juice of a green coconut, and between the shore and the reef there are baby octopuses and larger fish to be snared with torches after dark. There is no need for a Tahitian to bother about the demands of livelihood. When you drive into the districts along the one coast-round, you will see, lying out on mats on the long verandas, tall dark-eyed girls in red and white cotton dresses, their black hair falling loose over their shoulders, lazily stringing wreaths out of the white tiare blossoms while a young man in a straw hat with flowers round its brim strums upon a ukelele. It is all very much as Gauguin painted it.

In Martinique, on the other hand, everybody was extremely busy. A succession of trucks and carts high piled with sugar cane were in constant motion along broad, macadamed roads. The sickly sweet smell of molasses was heavy on the air. For hour after hour the long, weighted cutlasses were swinging against the cane stalks. Everywhere there was a sense of drive and effort.

Nor was it only the men who worked. The coaling of the ships, for instance, was all done by women. With baskets upon their heads, they would scuttle between the coal dump and the ship, desperately anxious, since they were paid at so much a basket, to make as many journeys as was possible. With automobiles generally available, the girl carriers—who would do their thirty miles a day with heavy loads upon their heads—were not as necessary as they had been in the 1880's, but I saw plenty of them on the road, with baskets of fish and fruit. Human transport was still

the cheapest. When, for instance, I found it impossible to pack my wardrobe trunk on to the small Lincoln that brought me out to the bungalow from Fort de France, the general servant was sent in to bring it on her head. It was cheaper, our landlord said, than making the car do a second journey.

As a corollary doubtless to this atmosphere of work and effort, money and commodities had an importance in Martinique that in Tahiti they had never had. We were careful to lock up everything in the bungalow whenever the servants were away. In Tahiti I had never bothered to do that. My second visit there I took a bungalow in town, but then decided to move into the country. I left my trunk and a good many of my clothes behind me. I also left a store cupboard full of tinned food and wines. It never occurred to me that I should lock them up. Tahitians are born millionaires. They have everything they need. They make gifts freely, but there is no need for them to steal. It was not till a good deal later that I realized quite how big a tribute I had paid to the Tahitians when I did not bother to lock up my bungalow.

The Tahitians again gave the sense of belonging all of them to one family. Their blood is no longer pure. They have intermarried with Europeans, they have intermarried with Chinese. To find the true Polynesian type which made so strong an impression on the mariners of the *Bounty*, you would have to look among the smaller and more distant islands, or perhaps among the Maoris of New Zealand. But weakened though the blood may be, you will see everywhere in Tahiti the same type of face, the large, luminous, dark eyes, the full lips, the smooth, oval chin, the half flattened nose. In Martinique there was no such similarity of feature. The faces on the whole were darker,

certainly in the country districts. There was not the same suggestion of European intermarriage. It did seem, on the other hand, that the same small village had been populated by the descendants of fifty different tribes. Never had I seen a more heterogeneous collection.

Their expressions were different too. The Tahitians wear often in repose an air of melancholy; an expression that Gauguin has caught in many of his downcast faces: an expression that is by no means inappropriate to their circumstance and history, to their loss of faith and future. But in spite of that expression they are essentially a happy, a gay and friendly people. You do not get that atmosphere of happiness among the natives of Martinique. They laugh a lot; they will throw back their heads and emit a high-pitched cackle. They are friendly; they are ready to help. They are enthusiastic. They are transported over the outcome of a cockfight. They will throw themselves into their carnival dances with abandon. They are excited easily. Yet there is an underlying sense of surliness about them.

Tahitian villages are like gardens, with grass paths and flowers trailing over wide verandas; the natives of Martinique on the other hand live in small, tight shacks. It is impossible for a fishing village not to look picturesque with its nets hung out to dry on poles, its boats beached against the cliffs and a stream rippling between houses over stones. But even the fishing villages of Martinique have an unkempt, a squalid air. There is no temptation to go native. I never heard of anyone who had. There were no beachcomber legends there. Martinique might be a rich island, in terms of exports and a balanced budget, but its inhabitants appeared to be living on a thin-worn shoestring.

The women of Martinique are famous for their looks, and certainly they are strikingly handsome, with their

straight, proud carriage and their bright scarves. But there is a general lack of graciousness about their life. There is none of the singing and the dancing, the picnics and the bathing parties of the Pacific. You will never see rolling along those broad, macadamed roads an old, old Ford truck crowded with gay young people, the girls with flowers in their hair, the young men with flower-crowned straw hats. There will be no shouting to the passers-by, no strumming upon ukeleles. Transport must serve a purpose. Cane has to be cut and loaded, the sugar mills have to be fed.

In the West Indies there is no impromptu gaiety. Wild parties are the outcome, not of the mood and moment, but of a cumulative mass excitement into which the entire population is absorbed.

I have been told that Trinidad is the best place in which to see the carnival, but that I rather fancy is because it is there that a majority of tourists have attended it. I suspect that carnival in the smaller islands is more spontaneous, because there it is less commercialized. I have only once been there for Mardi Gras, and then I was in Dominica. Residents told me that because there had been trouble the year before, it was on this occasion a rather tame affair. But it was wild enough. In Roseau everyone "ran mask." The masks were ghoulish and fantastic. From dawn to dusk the streets were patrolled by groups of revelers. They operated in bands, with a leader who pranced and cavorted at their head. They chanted "calypsos"—long trailing satires on contemporary events. They solicited alms. They raided the houses of their friends. If this was a tame affair, I could barely guess at the kind of pandemonium that must have broken out that day in Fort de France. I had left Martinique only ten days before and during the preceding weeks I had been conscious of a mounting tempo,

an atmosphere of dress rehearsal in every street, in every café, in every village. In the Bal Lou-Lou dance halls—the Palais, the Casino, and the Select Tango—on Saturday and Sunday evenings the noise was deafening.

The galleries and halls were crowded. Most of the girls were masked. They wore white stockings on their arms so that not an inch of dark skin appeared. Some of them, it was whispered, were white women in disguise. They might well be. It was a dance in which caste and blood are alike forgotten. Everyone was drunk, not with alcohol, but with music. People were dancing by themselves. They would shriek and wave their arms. They would seize a partner, dance with her for a moment, then break away. A woman embraced between two men would be shrieking to friends who were in the gallery. In the thronged center of the hall, couples close-clasped stood swaying, their feet and shoulders motionless, a look of ecstasy upon their faces.

The only phrases that would adequately describe the Bal Lou-Lou are incompatible with censorship. But there is all the difference in the world between the organized hysteria of the Bal Lou-Lou and the strumming of a ukelele on a casual Tahitian evening.

The prevalence of cock-fighting is also symptomatic. In Fort de France there was a large theater—a gallodrome—which the young "bloods" of the town frequented on Sundays after Mass. In every village there were contests on Sunday afternoons. It was a less brutal sport than I had expected. I went there for the first time expecting to be disgusted, but feeling that I owed it to myself as a piece of copy. I had been told that the birds wore spurs, that there would be a preliminary sparring scuffle, that then one of the birds would leap into the air and, with a single down-

ward stroke, drive his spur through the back of his opponent's neck. But it was not in the least like that. The birds were only spurred to the extent that their claws were sharpened. I never saw one bird killed. There would be, it is true, at the start of the fight a succession of attacks by leap, but these high spirits were soon abandoned, and the fight became a slugging match, each pecking at the other's head till, apparently by mutual agreement, they would pause for breath. Then their owners, who had all the time been crouching at their sides supplicating, abusing and exhorting them, would apply restorative measures, licking their wounds, feeding them with spirits, till the umpire signaled them to continue. The fight would go on till one of the birds, after a session in its corner, refused to fight, turning away its head and letting itself be pecked at.

A fight will last up to twenty minutes, and can be as boring, in itself, as the last five rounds between two exhausted and mediocre heavyweights when you know that there is no chance of a knockout. It was the audience much more than the birds that made me an amateur of the gallodrome. The cocks, with their red and raw necks, were drab and pitiable objects. But the backers, who shrieked encouragement from the ring, who jumped, who stamped their feet, who tossed their hats into the air; the owners, whose brown long-fingered hands writhed in every gesture of imprecation, whose faces were contorted successively with anger, hope, fear, shame, triumph, horror, pride, were a constant delight to me. When victory finally came, they would throw somersaults, stamp on their hats, pick up handfuls of earth and throw them in the air. It was well worth waiting twenty minutes for such a moment.

And it was because the audience was so much more entertaining than the fight that I found cock-fighting in

the districts more amusing than I did in town. In Fort de France the gallodrome was a circular, roofed-over, sanded ring, twenty yards across with ten or twelve tiers of seats rising from its circumference. But in the country there was no arena; the cocks would chase each other up and down the village street, tumbling into gutters and having to be rescued, with the population of the village following the fortunes of the fight, shouting, laughing, cheering, quarreling. It was the most hilarious performance. But it was all very remote from the ukeleles and the wreaths of pandanus and hibiscus and the white blossom of the tiare behind the ear. Martinique might be a high, green island in the tropics, under French authority, just out of the temperate zone, but it was populated by a different people; it represented and supported a different way of life; its past was different, its present and its future.

How different its past had been, how different had been the way of life that had been built about that past, I did not realize, I did not begin to realize, till I visited the ruins of St. Pierre. The destruction of St. Pierre is as familiar a story as the destruction of Pompeii; in a way it is more familiar since it happened in the lifetime of very many of us, inside this century. It had been too such a very lovely city. Lafcadio Hearn's was not the only pen that had described its beauties. It had a charm, a grace, a dignity that no other city in the West Indies had. Other cities had been scarred in battle or destroyed by earthquake. St. Pierre alone had had the good fortune to remain unchanged, to have grown slowly from the first pirate days, an example of growth and of tradition, a reminder of what Colonial France had been before the Revolution; a testimony to what it had become under the Third Republic.

There it had stood, stone-built, facing the sun, pro-

tected from wind and storm in the amphitheater of its guardian hills, with its red-tiled roofs, its lemon-colored walls and painted shutters, its wrought-iron balconies and gateways, with flowers trailing over its walls and windows, with its steep and narrow streets that broke into steps as streams break into a waterfalls: into the rivulets that kept the town cool and fragrant, so that at night, when the life of the town was still, you heard the perpetual music of falling water. Fort de France was the capital of Martinique, in the sense that, having the better harbor, it had to be the administrative center. But socially and culturally the center of the island was fifty miles down the coast under the shadow of Mont Pelé. Sailors over the seven seas would talk of it. And on a bright May morning in 1902, in forty-five seconds, the work of three centuries was gutted.

The story has been told many times. And every description that I have read, every side reference, every photograph, every news clipping of the previous days adds something to the dramatic irony of the tragedy. For days, for weeks the city had had its warnings. There had been noises; smoke plumes had risen from the mouth of the volcano. But the inhabitants had laughed. The old monster of the mountain was infirm, they said. He was only muttering in his sleep. On Sunday afternoons the young people continued to clamber up the steep sides to peer over the crater's edge, just as their grandparents had done. Even when the rumbling noises became explosions, when the river to the north of the city was swollen with a sudden torrent of boiling mud, even when there were heavy casualties along the river, even then no one really believed that there was any danger. A committee of scientific experts made an examination on the spot and issued a report that there was no cause for the least alarm. On the very afternoon before

the disaster, the Governor drove out from Fort de France to take up residence in St. Pierre, to allay the fears of the inhabitants and to prove by his presence his complete faith in the verdict of his experts. He wanted nothing to interfere with the town's traditional enjoyment of its *jourde fête*.

As likely as not, on the next morning that broke bright and clean, he was sitting on his balcony in the sunlight over his rolls and coffee, watching the town prepare for a day of parade and pleasure, at the very moment when, shortly after eight, two loud explosions thundered from the hills behind and sailors from the decks of the ships at anchor saw a large white cloud emerge from the crater of Mont Pelé—it looked as though one side of the mountain fell away—to roll towards the sea like an Alpine avalanche. In less than a minute the town had been destroyed. Forty-five thousand people—nearly half the population of the island—had been killed. There was only one survivor, a convict who was in an underground cell, awaiting trial. It was three days before he was discovered.

I had read descriptions of St. Pierre, I had read accounts of its destruction, but it was not until I actually visited the ruins that I realized what it was that had been destroyed. There is nothing harder to visualize than a house in scaffolding, or a house whose foundation has been cut out upon the ground. The rooms look ridiculously small. In an obverse way, a ruined building looks often larger than a house that is unimpaired. The most impressive columns I have ever seen are the few still standing out of the fifty or so that once formed the Temple of Jupiter at Baalbek. I have wondered whether they looked so impressive when they were part of a complete structure. In the same way, St. Pierre may possibly be more impressive now in ruins

than it ever was when it rose from the waterfront between its gardens.

The town has never been rebuilt. The harbor still carries on a certain amount of business, as a port for the northern districts. There is a hotel, a market place, a few shops, a gallodrome, a museum. Three or four thousand people have improvised ramshackle buildings in the angles of broken walls. But the town is two streets deep. You can wander at will down the deserted paths, making out through the tangle of grass and brambles the outlines of streets and courtyards and garden walls and gateways. Seen from the sea, or from the waterfront, St. Pierre may have given a flat appearance, as Villefranche does and so many other Mediterranean towns that have been built back into a solid rock. But when you walk among its ruins you see how much of it there was; you seem also to be seeing inside its life. You get a glimpse of the kind of life that was conducted there, of the people that must have led that life, of the past out of which that life had grown.

It was while I was walking through the ruins of St. Pierre that I became fully and guiltily conscious of my ignorance about West Indian life, that I became curious and anxious to correct that ignorance, that I began to read with care the books I had brought out with me, and of which up till then I had done little more than turn the pages.

The West Indian Background

I HAD BROUGHT out with me a bare half-dozen books, but thanks to the generosity of the Carnegie Trust, most of the islands are supplied with sound reference libraries, and it is easy for the inquisitive tourist to provide himself with a working knowledge of the history and present conditions of the group.

It is a long and tangled story, a story of courage and cruelty, of treachery and broken faith and high renown; so tangled and so long a story that no composite history of the Caribbean has been attempted. But, as the editors of fiction magazines know well, the most complicated narrative, the most intricate succession of incidents and details can be resolved into a five-line synopsis, and the story of the West Indies is briefly this: At the end of the fifteenth century Christopher Columbus, believing that the earth was round and in an attempt to find a western route to India, discovered a group of islands that, in the light of this belief, he christened the West Indies. In their attempt to exploit his discovery, subsequent European pioneers came into such conflict with the original inhabitants of the islands that within a very few years the Indians who had inhabited the northern islands and, a century or so later, the Caribs who had inhabited the eastern islands had been "liquidated." In the meantime, sugar cane had been intro-

duced, and, in order to supply cheap labor for the plantations, a slave trade with the Guinea coast was organized. There followed a period of very great prosperity, when the phrase "rich as a Creole" was in daily use. Then "the conscience of mankind" was roused. The slave trade was abolished. The slaves were liberated. Simultaneously, owing to the rise of the beet industry, cane sugar slumped. The islands, instead of being an asset, became a liability, a distressed area.

That is the story in synopsis—a synopsis that may be amplified into four instalments.

There is the first period, roughly covering the sixteenth century, which is almost exclusively a Spanish period. During this period the Spaniards, having been granted by papal dispensation all the discoveries of the New World west of a certain line, colonized Hispaniola (the island which has since been divided into Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica, exterminated the Indians, introduced the sugar cane from the Canaries, and initiated the slave trade.

The second period, covering the seventeenth century, saw the gradual breaking down of the Spanish monopoly. The French and English were in a position to challenge the Spanish Navy. The Spaniards, moreover, who had made the mistake as political economists of confusing bul-
lion with wealth, lost interest in the islands on finding that there was no gold and silver there and moved further west to Peru and Mexico. During this period the English captured Jamaica, the French captured the western and most fertile part of Hispaniola and called it Haiti, and the French and English occupied and disputed between themselves the chain of islands that stretches southwards between Florida and Demerara, exterminating in the process

their Carib population. This period, which is the period also of the buccaneers, ended at the start of the eighteenth century with Spain's recognition of England's and France's conquests; the Treaty of Utrecht marking in 1713 the elimination of Spain as a monopolist on the Caribbean scene.

The third period, of the eighteenth century, saw the high peak of West Indian prosperity. In its latter half there was much bitter fighting between the French and English. One of the greatest naval battles of all time was to be fought there. Most of the islands were to change hands several times; cities were to be sacked and plantations burned. But war was not total in those days. War was the concern of the professionals, of the politicians and the chiefs of staff. Byron made the grand tour during the Napoleonic Wars. No one reading Jane Austen's novels would imagine that they were contemporaneous with Trafalgar and Waterloo, and, in spite of almost continuous war during the latter half of this period, there was no diminution in the general prosperity of the sugar islands. Actual statistics convey little; the value of money has changed so much, populations are so much greater. But the importance of these islands can be gauged adequately from the fact that at the peace making in 1763 England very nearly decided to retain Guadeloupe and return Canada to France as being of less account. One of England's chief colonial mistakes at this period was indeed a failure to recognize the far greater importance of "the continental colonies." The attempt to implement the Molasses Act—an act designed to assist the sugar islands at the expense of the American colonies—was an important contributory factor to the War of Independence, and it is indeed probable that during the Napoleonic Wars more British lives were lost in the West Indies than in Europe.

That third period ended or, rather, may be said to have begun to end, with the French Revolution. By the time the Napoleonic Wars were over, the agitation against the slave trade had grown acute. The Spanish-American colonies were in revolt. The Monroe Doctrine had been proclaimed. The imperial policy both of France and England was turning southwards towards Africa and eastwards to the Levant and the Orient. The red light was showing for the big plantations.

The liberation of the slaves ended the prosperity of the West Indies. The big landowners were compensated for the loss of their slaves, but most of the estates were mortgaged. The liberated slaves could not be induced to work. The planters, instead of reinvesting their capital on the spot, returned to Europe, abandoning their estates to overseers who mismanaged them either through incompetence or on purpose so that they themselves might have an opportunity later of buying them at a bargain price. There were temporary recoveries and booms, but the descent was steady and grew sharper. Each time there was a slump, another group of estates was put upon the market, to be bought up by syndicates or split up among small proprietors. The large houses were left to crumble.

No new European colonists came out; one by one the colonists of purely European descent went home, and for those that remained the social line between those that were of pure European descent and those that had intermarried with Creoles of African extraction grew more and more difficult to draw. The fourth period began; the period of decline, the period that has not yet ended.

The first and Spanish period is one of the least creditable in Europe's history. The aborigines of the northern islands,

Hispaniola, Jamaica, Cuba and Puerto Rico, bore as far as we can gather at this late day a strong resemblance to the Polynesians. They were of a clear brown complexion. They had straight black hair, broad faces and flat noses; they altered the shape of their heads, depressing their skulls in childhood with a wooden frame, a procedure that so strengthened the bone that blows from a Spanish broadsword often broke the blade off at the hilt—a Spanish comment and complaint that provides a symptomatic testimony to Spanish treatment. By European standards they were not facially beautiful. But they had fine dark eyes and friendly smiles. They were tall, they moved gracefully, and every observer is agreed as to their attractiveness. Christopher Columbus wrote in his report to Ferdinand and Isabella: "So loveable, so tractable, so peaceable are these people that I swear to your Majesties that there is not in the world a better nation nor a better land. They love their neighbors as themselves and their discourse is ever sweet and gentle and accompanied with a smile."

Something of their dignity may be gathered from the speech of welcome made to Columbus by one of the chiefs in Cuba:

"Whether you are divinities or mortal men, we know not. You have come into these countries with a force against which, were we inclined to resist it, resistance would be folly: we are all therefore at your mercy. But if you are men subject to mortality like ourselves, you cannot be unapprised that after this life there is another, wherein a very different portion is allotted to good and bad men. If therefore you expect to die and believe with us that everyone is to be rewarded in a future state according to his conduct in the present, you will do no hurt to those who do no hurt to you."

Everything that is to be read about these Indians reminds us of the Polynesians. They were unambitious, happy and pleasure loving. They supported themselves mainly upon maize. They had made little attempt to develop the resources of the soil, though they possessed some skill in the fashioning of domestic furniture, and made Columbus a present of some handsome ebony chairs. They would dance from dusk to dawn, often in large companies of many thousands. They amused themselves with a fiber football, which they kicked over their shoulders with the backs of their heels, maintaining it in the air for long periods. They welcomed the proud Spaniards as gods descended from the skies.

The Spaniards, however, suffered from the obtuseness of those who consider themselves a master race. They looked on the Indians as inferiors by whom they were owed, as a right, service and submission. They considered themselves, moreover, the subjects of a holy mission. They had crossed the ocean with great skill and courage, at considerable danger and discomfort, to spread the glory of Ferdinand and Isabella, to add to their Majesties' possessions, to acquire wealth, to preach the gospel and to convert the heathen. Their first investigations convinced them mistakenly that the islands generally and Hispaniola in particular were rich in gold. It seemed to them only proper that the Indians should work for them in the mines; and their fury was limitless when the Indians failed to recognize their rôle of servitors, refusing to work, escaping into the hills, often committing suicide. Nor could the Indians be made to appreciate the application to themselves of the foreign creed which approved such practices and in which the Spaniards diligently and patiently endeavored to instruct them. When the Spaniards, in order to encourage the

remainder to work and pray, roasted a few dozen over a slow fire, having gagged them first so that their screams should not disturb the officers' siesta, the survivors grew resentful, and whenever a bunch of them happened upon a solitary Spaniard, slaughtered him. The Spaniards thereupon ordered that for every European killed, a hundred Indians should be burned and disemboweled. It was all very much what was to happen in Europe four centuries later, only for the Indians there was no rescuing D-Day. Within twenty years the entire Indian population of Hispaniola had been wiped out.

How many Indians were liquidated during those early years it is impossible to assess. It has been said that there was originally in Hispaniola alone a population of two million. It is hard to believe that there were so many, and it is hard to see how this figure was arrived at, but there is much evidence to show that the islands were well populated. Europe has often been criticized for the havoc that its traders wrought in the South Sea Islands, and there can be no question that the Polynesians, after receiving the benefits of Western civilization, deteriorated in health and morals. But everything that traders and missionaries did in the Pacific seems trivial in comparison with this extermination of an entire race. The only excuse that can be offered for the Spaniards is that, suffering under the delusion of being a master race, they did genuinely believe that salvation for the Indians could only lie through conversion to Christianity. It all happened, it must be remembered, in the days of the Inquisition. The medieval conscience was different from the twentieth century conscience. One has to try to see historical events from the angle at which they appeared to contemporary observers.

A similar fate was to befall a century later, at the hands of the French and the English, the original Carib inhabitants of the Windward and Leeward Islands; but there the situation was somewhat different. In the first place, the islands were not nearly so densely populated. Barbados and Antigua are reported to have been uninhabited; and, secondly, the Caribs were a warlike race that was constantly raiding the northern islands and had probably at an earlier period captured its own homesteads from the Indians. A few Carib settlements are still to be seen in Dominica. But the mild, dark-skinned, straight-haired creatures of today are very different from the skilled warriors who resisted the foreign colonists. They were tall and brown with shining, long black hair that they dressed daily with great care, and only cut short when they were in mourning. Like the Indians they altered the shape of their heads, but in an opposite manner, by placing boards on the forehead and on the back of the head of the growing child, so that in adult life their heads had a box-like look. They scarred their cheeks with deep incisions, which they painted black. They also incised black and white circles round their eyes. They were beardless, removing all superfluous hair. Many of them perforated the dividing cartilage of their nostrils and inserted a fishbone or piece of tortoise shell. They made bangles for their arms and ankles out of the teeth of their dead enemies. Their children were taught the use of the bow and arrow by having their food suspended out of reach from trees, and having to go hungry till they could shoot it down. A boy before he was admitted to the rites of manhood underwent a cruel initiation ceremony. The Caribs were xenophobic and loved fighting. It was a long and bitter battle that they fought from their

strongholds in the hills against the English and the French. In St. Vincent they were unsubdued at the time of the French Revolution.

This second period of West Indian history, during which the French and British divided the Windward and Leeward group, is in many ways the most romantic period of the four. It is this period which provides the material for all those serial stories of buried treasure and galleons stranded in the Sargasso Sea with which our boyhoods were entranced. To every young Englishman of spirit, the Spanish Main was a "finger beckoning to adventure." There was glamor there and danger and high reward. The Spaniards had made the usual "Whitehall error" of imagining that the lives of colonists living three thousand miles away and in the tropics can be ordered by minutes and memoranda drafted in city offices in a temperate climate. The bureaucrats of Cadiz insisted that their colonies should only trade with the mother country, and regarded as privateers the ships of all other nations. The colonists, on the other hand, were eager to welcome the Dutch, French and English merchantmen who brought the goods on which their comforts and often their existence depended. It was in fact a "free for all." Every Englishman, Frenchman and Dutchman was likely, if he were captured by the Spaniards, to be tortured and put to death. The Spanish Main was not only filled with pirates, waiting to pounce upon Spanish convoys, but with honest merchantmen trading from Bristol and Brest and Amsterdam, as well as by peaceful emigrants seeking "the land of opportunity." The *Mayflower*, for instance, had it been intercepted by the Spaniards, might have been regarded as a privateer. No Englishman knew what support he would receive from his own Government. He did not know if he would be treated as

a patriot or a pirate. His position was that of an agent in the Secret Service, who is recompensed when he succeeds and unacknowledged when he fails. Drake was knighted. Raleigh was beheaded.

Nor had England, distracted as she was by civil war, any settled colonial policy. Vincent T. Harlow's book on Christopher Codrington gives a significant picture of the difficulties that a serious English administrator had to face during the French Wars at the end of the seventeenth century, when the soldiers' pay was six years in arrears, and "colonial governors were required to enforce unpalatable laws while drawing inadequate salaries." It is remarkable that under such conditions the foundations of the British Empire were laid, that Jamaica was captured from the Spaniards, and that Barbados, Antigua, Nevis, Monserrat and half of St. Kitts were colonized. As Harlow has said, however, "a defective machine works tolerably well in the hands of skilful mechanics," and in the Elizabethan and post-Elizabethan era many of the finest Englishmen in the country's history were seeking their fortune across the seas.

It was not only men such as Codrington, however, who were ranging the Caribbean, and it was during the middle of the seventeenth century that there flourished on the island of Tortuga what Philip Gosse has described as that "strange and sinister school of piracy 'The Brotherhood of the Coast.' "

In their origins these brothers were not nearly as sinister as their subsequent exploits would suggest. For the most part they were French refugees from St. Kitts who decided when the Spaniards moved westwards to Peru and Mexico, leaving behind them large herds of imported cattle, to settle in the western and now almost uninhabited section

of Hispaniola. They were called buccaneers, because *boucan* was the Indian name for the open fires over which they dried their meat upon a spit—the English mispronouncing the word “boucaniers,” in the same way that the French converted the English Freebooters into “Filibusters.” These buccaneers were a shaggy, surly group of derelicts who managed to achieve in their exile a standardized simplicity of appearance. They wore a common uniform: a little closefitting cap, breeches, and a jacket reaching half-way to their knees that was so stained with the blood of animals that it was difficult to recognize that it was made of cloth. They wore a belt set with a bayonet and four knives. Their muskets were as tall as they were. On their feet they wore oxhide or pigskin moccasins. They would skin an animal as soon as it had been killed, then, setting the big toe where the knee had been, they would bind it with a sinew, tying the remainder a few inches above the heel. When the skin had dried it would be found to have taken the impress of the foot and would retain its shape.

They had neither families nor wives. There was scarcely a woman on the island. Each took a partner, sharing the work, one hunting while the other cooked, and the one who lived the longer inheriting their joint possessions. Had they been left alone to hunt and salt their meat and sell it to passing ships, this little community of outcasts would have disappeared with no one having heard of it. The Spaniards, however, preferred to persecute them, forcing them to seek refuge in the neighboring island of Tortuga, and there, grown desperate and revengeful, to ally themselves in the Brotherhood of the Coast that was to number among its chiefs Sir Henry Morgan.

Those that are interested in their feats may be referred to Philip Gosse's *History of Piracy* and to Esquemeling's

Buccaneers. Those feats lie outside the province of this book, but it may even so be pertinent to recall how, when the French had taken over the western part of Hispaniola from the Spaniards, and called it Haiti, D'Ogeron, the first French Administrator to regulate and regularize West Indian trade, decided in a characteristically Parisian manner to subdue the buccaneers. "I will fetch chains from France for the fettering of these rascals" was the way he put it. But it was not for muskets and cages, but for a consignment of wives that he indented.

Fifty women were shipped out to him. They were the gleanings of the sorriest social stock. It is reported that D'Ogeron's heart sank at the sight of them. They had been little to look at when they started. Now, after six weeks on a two hundred ton trader, for the first fortnight of which they had been profoundly sick, during the last month of which they had itched with scurvy, during the last fortnight of which they had been sunburned, so that the skin on their cheeks and noses had begun to peel; after six weeks, that is to say, of dirt, discomfort and unwholesome food, they looked in their tawdry, bedraggled finery infinitely less appetizing than the erect, firm-breasted Negresses who had gathered on the quay to watch the unloading of this unusual cargo. They were women and they were white, but that was the most that could be said of them.

D'Ogeron was not the man to make the worst of a bad job, however. He cleaned his quota, then sent messages to Tortuga.

Five hundred or so of the buccaneers came over. Mute and suspicious, they glared at the nervous, simpering but hard-eyed, hard-mouthed group that had gathered on the veranda of the Governor's house.

"My friends," said D'Ogeron, "with great courage and with the cherishing kindness that distinguishes their sex from ours, these gracious ladies, having heard in their country, which is your country too, of your hard and lonely lot, were moved with compassion and have come across these many miles to share and make sweet that loneliness. As you see, there are fifty here. Each has consented to take unto her from among your number a husband whom she will obey and honor. It is fitting that the choice should be made not by her, but for her and by you. So, as there are more of you than there are of them, we have agreed that those of you who wish shall draw lots among yourselves as to the right and precedence of choice. I am confident as a consolation for those who will be disappointed in the fall of the lots that the example of these brave ladies will not be overlooked in France and that in a few months others will have come to follow them."

The lots were drawn; and on the veranda of D'Ogeron's bungalow, each in his turn swore the marriage oath of the buccaneer—the oath that from history's dawn has been sworn differently worded or unworded, but implied, by the outlaws, the Bohemians of life to one another: "I take thee," each cried in turn, "without knowing or caring to know who thou art. If anybody from whence thou comest would have had thee, thou wouldst not have come in quest of me. But no matter. I do not desire thee to give me an account of thy past conduct, because I have no right to be offended at it at the time when thou wast at liberty to live either ill or well according to thine own pleasure and because I shall have no reason to be ashamed of anything thou wast guilty of when thou didst not belong to me. Give me only thy word for the future. I acquit thee of the past." Then with a heavy clatter each smote the palm of

his hand against the barrel of his musket, brandishing it above his head. "This will revenge me of thy breach of faith. If thou shouldst prove false, this will surely be true to my aim."

It was in the 1660's that D'Ogeron began the domestication of the buccaneers, but it was to be another thirty years before the Spaniards conceded the right of foreign ships to trade in the Caribbean—a concession that was to provide the requisite settled conditions for the development of West Indian trade.

Vast fortunes were to be made during the next hundred years. It was only recently that Europeans had had an opportunity of enjoying warm, sweet drinks—until the seventeenth century they had subsisted on beer and wine—and there was an unlimited demand for sugar, for coffee and for cocoa. The big landowners lived in state, attended by many slaves, entertaining in a Trimalchian manner.

The foundation of their prosperity was the slave trade. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, twenty thousand slaves a year were being transported to the British colonies in America and in the Caribbean. Bryan Edwards, who is considered reliable upon contemporary statistics, states that shortly before the American War of Independence the cities of Liverpool, London, Lancaster and Bristol were operating in this trade alone a fleet of nearly two hundred vessels, with accommodation for fifty thousand slaves. Other countries were engaged as well, and British ships did not by any means trade only with British colonies. Forty factories, as they were called, were maintained on the coasts of Africa, of which seventeen were owned by the British and fifteen by the Dutch. It was estimated that seventy-four thousand slaves were shipped annually across

the Atlantic. And it is important to remember that populations at that time were everywhere much smaller than they are today, the population of England and Wales being in 1750 about six million.

These forty factories were scattered down the length of the Guinea coast, so it is not surprising that the inhabitants of the same small village in Martinique should have seemed to me to have been populated by the descendants of fifty different tribes. The eighteenth century planters recognized and appreciated the immense difference between one tribe and another. The men of one tribe would fetch higher prices than the men of others and the young planter was issued with manuals explaining how he could distinguish between one tribe and another and instructing him how to deal with each particular type. The Mandingos from Senegal were the best and hardest workers, but their virility made them difficult. It was dangerous to have too many of them on one plantation. Codrington wrote of the Conomanto that "the man does not deserve him who would not treat him as a friend." The Eboes, on the other hand, though a tractable and gentle people, were timid, despondent and likely to commit suicide, while the men of Angola were so mild as to be better fitted for domestic service than field labor. As far as possible, the planters tried to separate the different tribes on their estates. They were afraid that they might combine together and rebel. The planters did everything to break their links with Africa, to teach them a new language and a new faith. Old differences of tribe are now obliterated; a new language has been evolved by the natives out of their original African and the English, French and Spanish that they have heard spoken round them. They think of themselves now as Bar-

badians, Haitians or Jamaicans. But the difference of their origins is still marked upon their features.

Judged by contemporary standards, the slave trade cannot be regarded as anything but one of the most criminal enterprises that Europe ever undertook. It must be remembered, however, that no one at the time felt that it was wrong. Africans were not apparently considered altogether human, and Las Casas, the Bishop of Chiapa, who was greatly shocked at the treatment the Indians were receiving in Hispaniola, proposed in 1517 as a solution of the problem that each Spanish resident should be allowed to import a dozen Negro slaves. Later he was to regret this suggestion. But the fact that such a proposal was made by a good and holy man is an indication of the ideas prevalent at the time. African Negroes were looked upon as animal machinery; when there was a shortage of labor it was good business to transport supplies of it.

The average man today is appalled by such brutally elementary logic. But it is well for us to remember that we cannot tell how posterity is going to judge our present actions. To myself, at this moment of writing, the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima is ethically justified because it shortened the war and saved the million or so American and British lives that would have been lost in the invasion of the Japanese mainland. It is possible that different opinions will be held in two hundred years. And it is very necessary in considering the slave trade, of which present conditions in the West Indies are the direct consequence, to keep in mind the scope of the eighteenth century conscience.

It is also necessary to remember that practically every account we have of the actual working of the slave trade

is based either on the propaganda organized by the abolitionists or the defense put forward by the planters. The abolitionists argued their strong case well. Diagrams were produced showing how Negroes were packed close in holds three feet high, without light or air or sanitation, their ankles manacled by chains that, as the ship rolled, cut into their flesh. Laid on their right sides to make easier the action of their heart, they were arranged in the fashion of spoons, the bent knees of one fitting into the hamstrings of the next. These gruesome diagrams were accompanied by telling descriptions of how the Negroes were nourished on rotten rice and tainted water; of how though they were taken on deck each morning and soused with water while the holds were scrubbed, the stench grew so overpowering that "a slaver" could be smelled a mile away. Pamphlet after pamphlet has described the horrors of the "middle passage," maintaining that fifteen per cent of the cargo died on the journey over.

But when we read these pamphlets today and when we read the accounts of "the middle passage" that have been based upon these pamphlets, we should remember not only that these pamphlets were written with a propaganda purpose, but that the conditions in which the sailors of the Royal Navy lived would today fill with disgust the sorriest slum brat; we should also remember—and this is a far more important point—that it was in the commercial interest of the captain and of the company which employed the captain to see that the cargo was delivered in sound condition. Real money had been paid for it at the factories. Unless real money was received for it at Cap François and Port Royal, the voyage would show a loss. The captain who did not earn a good profit for his owners would not be commissioned twice. It was in the captain's interest to

keep his cargo healthy. It might, of course, be more profitable to ship two hundred slaves under conditions that killed off fifty than to deliver a hundred slaves in good condition, provided that the price on delivery was sufficiently higher than the factory price to justify a writing off of twenty-five per cent as damaged stock. But the condition of the cargo was always of primary concern.

"The horrors of the middle passage" constitute far less of a crime against humanity than all that was involved by the factories on the Guinea Coast. There they were, those forty forts whose job it was to provide cargo for the slaver. Their presence on the edge of the bush was a constant excitement to crime, an encouragement and intensification of all that was most barbarous in the African. In their greed for Western commodities, the chiefs not only raided hostile tribes but even their own villagers. The companies that owned the forts did everything in their power to foment tribal wars. The factories along the Guinea Coast were far and away the worst feature of the slave trade.

For as regards the actual conditions under which the slaves lived after they had been sold in the markets of Haiti and Barbados, it must be again remembered that very many of the accounts that we have of plantation life are part of that same abolitionist campaign. That slavery is criminal is self-evident, and that bestial cruelty was displayed by overseers and owners there is no doubt. There are as witnesses the chains and implements of torture in the Jamaica Institute. We know that absolute power corrupts. And the owners had absolute power. Moreover, the slaves outnumbered the whites by ten to one. The whites were frightened of their slaves. Risings of the slaves and slaughtering of the white overseers were not infrequent. Fear fathers cruelty. Even the more paternal landlords were con-

vinced of the necessity of "occasional examples." Terrible things were no doubt done by men made vicious by the heat in an atmosphere of boredom, suspicion, and self-indulgence. The tortures that were practiced and are on record would make an appropriate appendix to a study of perverse psychology, but at the same time it is reasonable to assume that such instances were exceptional. A slave was a valuable piece of property, worth five to seven hundred dollars at a time when a thousand dollars yearly was a cozy income. A man does not damage his own possessions. The health of the laborers was one of the first requisites to a prosperous plantation. It is tolerably certain that when abolition came, many slaves of the first generation considered they had been better off when they were the direct responsibility of their masters.

Indeed, it is doubtful whether the poorer types of West Indian laborers are very much better off today than they were a hundred and fifty years ago. Harold Stannard wrote in *The Times* in 1938: "For most inhabitants of the West Indies life means work for a white boss at the subsistence level and has never meant anything else since the first Africans were brought over some four hundred years ago." In an earlier article he had written of the agricultural worker of Jamaica: "The first time I saw one of their hovels I could hardly believe that it was intended for human occupation. Strands of dried bamboo are woven round a framework of stakes and 'the room' thus formed is covered with palm thatch. There is no furniture except sacking on the earth and some sort of table to hold the oil stove. . . . Urban conditions are," he continued, "if anything, worse. In a region of Kingston now marked down for slum clearance are shacks put together anyhow out of the sides of packing cases and sheets of corrugated iron."

In the same year a commission appointed to make an economic survey of Grenada wrote of the conditions there: "The housing of the agricultural laborer is disgraceful. It is impossible to use any other word to describe it. Houses little larger than small bicycle sheds are made of beaten out kerosene tins or old packing cases. Others are made of pitch-pine specially purchased, but since there is seldom money to buy paint or some other preservative for the wood, it soon rots. Perhaps a better type of house is made of wattle and daub. They are said to be damp, but if they have board floors they are probably superior to the ordinary wooden house. . . . In this rickety structure miscalled a house the laborer and his family have to live. Sometimes the house is divided into rooms by a partition and old newspapers are eagerly sought after to stick on the walls. Very often there is only one room and in this room the laborer, his wife and children, are crowded pell mell. There is no privacy: baths and proper sanitation are absent. Usually there is only one bed (or what passes as such) and the children sleep huddled together on the floor. So far as possible every crack in the floor is stopped at night to prevent the ingress of mosquitoes, draughts and 'evil spirits.' "

If one considers how the housing and general living conditions of the European laborer have risen during the last century and a half, it is very clear that there has been no proportionate rise in the standards of the West Indian laborer. I would recommend anyone who is interested in the subject to read some of the abolitionist tracts and speeches, to read Monk Lewis's *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* and Bryan Edwards's *History of the British West Indies*, recognizing that both Lewis and Edwards were apologists; then to examine the conditions under which the poorer

types of West Indian live today, assessing from that examination the progress that has been made since emancipation. He should then be able to form an opinion as to the extent to which the old plantation system was, in terms of the slaves themselves, practical and paternal and to what extent it was tyrannical, brutal and corrupt.

I have dealt at this length with the plantation system and the slave trade because that system and that trade are the foundations on which present day West Indian life is built. The problems of today are the direct and logical outcome of that system. The vast majority of the inhabitants of the West Indian islands, not only of the laborers and longshoremen, but of the planters and legislators, are partly at least of African origin, are the descendants, that is to say, of slaves. Emancipation took place little over a hundred years ago: the slave trade was started over four hundred years ago. It would be surprising if there remained no traces of a slave mentality, if those years of servitude had not left a legacy of suspicion and resentment; a legacy which explains the sullenness of expression that I had noticed on the faces in Martinique.

There are other legacies as well; two main legacies, I think. The first and the more important one being the inherent, hereditary laziness of the West Indian laborer. In quite considerable part, the decline of the West Indian prosperity in the middle of the nineteenth century was due to the inability of the planters to induce the liberated slaves to work. For three hundred years the sugar estates had been run on a system of the laborer working under compulsion, with his old age protected and with private enterprise limited to the cultivation of his own small allotment. It is not surprising that the laborer of today, nurtured in

that tradition, should be idle and improvident, and that consequently his standard of living should be so low and the profits on the estates so small.

That is the first legacy of the plantation system, that the laborer has not yet grasped the idea of working for a wage or planning for a future. The second is the color question which today through the whole group of islands is no less acute because it is nowhere honestly and frankly faced.

Color from the start has been a problem in the islands. Before the eighteenth century was far advanced, the rise of a mixed population had become a very serious consideration. For if the white overlord was the superior of the black man, through the mere fact of being white, then it must follow that a man who was half white was superior to the pure African. It also followed that the man who was half white was the superior of the man who was quarter white and the inferior of the one who was three-quarter white. Elaborate systems of protocol were devised and no one was more insistent than the members of the mulatto class themselves that these distinctions should be recognized and regarded. It is said today that the French do not draw a color line, but before the Revolution the French were even more "nice" than the English and the Spanish. Moreau de St. Mery drew up a list showing the two hundred variations of blended coloring that might exist.

A people that has been brought up in such an atmosphere cannot suddenly lose their sense of color because some advanced thinkers in Bloomsbury and Greenwich Village have decided that racial discrimination is "all my eye."

I met during the First World War a man who had been born in the West Indies. A few years older than myself, he was tall and thin and handsome, and dark only in the way

that certain Mediterranean types are dark, with an olive complexion and with straight black hair. He was a cricketer and later, after the war, in London I was to meet him a number of times at Lord's and in club matches. We became quite good friends; then, as one does, lost touch. A few years later I was to find him on the quay when my ship docked at Bridgetown. He had seen my name on the passenger list and had come down to meet me. I was not breaking my journey in Barbados. I had made no plans for myself. "That's fine," he said. "In that case, I'll consider you my guest."

He was now, he told me, in the Colonial service. Meeting him in England, it had not occurred to me—it had not occurred to any of us—that he had colored blood. Meeting him now in the atmosphere of the West Indies, I recognized the fact at once. There was a sixth to an eighth part, I should imagine. His father had a plantation on the windward coast, and we drove across to it for lunch. It was a modern house with a prosperous appearance. His father was dignified, well educated, with a somewhat patrician manner. But there was not the slightest doubt that one at least of his grandparents had been very nearly black. There was a girl to make a fourth, very young and very pretty, with a pleasantly modulated, sing-song West Indian voice. She did not talk a great deal. But she was an interested listener. She watched my friend all the time.

My friend asked me about her that night when we dined alone in town.

"What did you think of her?" he said.

"Charming, naturally. And very lovely."

"Would you say that it was quite obvious that she had colored blood?"

I hesitated. It is the kind of question that one does not

like to have asked one in the West Indies. One is uncertain as to the kind of answer that is expected. Usually I tend to prevaricate. But she was so very obviously colored, rather more than quarter caste, and I knew the man pretty well. "Well, I suppose it is," I said, "a little."

He laughed rather ruefully. "I was afraid you would say that. Yes, it is obvious. And I'm in the Government service. I'm ambitious. As you know I did quite well at Oxford. I got a 'mention' in the war. There's no reason why I shouldn't go quite a long way. Of course, I'm a West Indian myself. You may not have noticed but I am. It isn't very obvious. I don't think anyone in England was aware of it. It wouldn't do me any harm in my career—particularly if I were to marry someone who was a hundred per cent white. But if I were to marry Cecile—no, it would never do. I should never get anywhere. I should be offered minor, insignificant appointments all my life. And the damnable thing is that I don't suppose I shall ever care for anyone in the way that I do for her."

I have not seen him since. But I have followed his career. He is in West Africa, relatively high up in the service. He is married, to an Englishwoman, and is the father of two children. The second war brought him a C.B.E. He is in the middle fifties and will be retiring soon. He has a reasonable chance of being knighted. He has been successful. But I wonder if he has been happy.

This happened, or rather this choice was presented to him, twenty years ago, and the issue of color as the issue of class is, it must be remembered, a different one today. Lines are not so strictly drawn. He was a Barbadian, too, and as such would be more conscious of this particular issue than a Jamaican or a Trinidadian. Moreover, it is possible that my friend was exaggerating the effect on his

career of marriage to a girl of obviously African ancestry. But the fact that he was conscious of those dangers, that those dangers should have constituted so actual a problem for him, is symptomatic of West Indian life. Everywhere under the surface that problem lies. For over four hundred years there has been interbreeding between black and white, and brown and quarter-white. Every shade of color is to be found. And the man with a greater degree of white considers himself the superior of the man with a lesser degree of white, and the man with the lesser degree resents it. It is a problem that affects business, local politics, and all social relations.

For the visitor it is a tricky and a tiresome situation. It is tricky because he does not know who is considered colored and who is not. Except in Barbados and in Antigua there are hardly any local families without some African ancestry. Yet these slightly colored families rigidly exclude from their clubs those with obviously dark skins. British governors and administrators refuse to recognize these distinctions and invite impartially to Government House dinners and tennis parties the white, the near white, the colored and the coal black. The various groups meet amicably there at the cocktail bar and the bridge table. Then they scatter to their separate cliques. In every island except Grenada there are two camps and the visitor has to make his choice.

In the cool of the evening he will stroll up from his hotel to the savannah. He will pass a succession of small shacks and shops, with radios playing, and bright interiors and children tumbling over one another in the gutter. He will reach an open space. A couple of tennis courts flank a long, wide bungalow. He will pause and watch the play. The young and the middle-aged are meeting on equal

terms; the standard of the play is high; the bungalow is brightly lighted; a man in shirtsleeves is leaning forward across a billiard table; a boy in white uniform is carrying a tray of drinks to a quiet corner of the veranda where a bridge four is in progress; a dozen or so persons of mixed sexes are at the bar; there are others, sitting out in deck chairs on the veranda, watching the play. It is all very cozy and congenial, a friendly mixing of sexes and of age groups. But this is not the club towards which the visitor is on his way. The faces of the members are dark or fairly dark.

He will go on a little further. He will pass another succession of shacks and shops. Then once again he will reach an open space. A couple of tennis courts flank a long, wide bungalow. He will pause to watch the tennis. The standard of the play is high; the young and the middle-aged are mixing on equal terms; the bungalow is brightly lighted; a man in shirtsleeves is leaning forward across a billiard table; a boy in white uniform is carrying a tray of drinks to a quiet corner of the veranda where a bridge four is in progress; a dozen or so persons, of mixed sexes, are at the bar; there are others, sitting out in deck chairs on the veranda watching the play. It is all very cozy and congenial, a friendly mixing of sexes and of age groups. It is the club of which the British Administrator is the patron. Its membership consists of British officials and the families of those planters, agents and store owners whose skin is either white or nearly enough white to pass as white. This is the club for which the visitor is bound, and unless he is very bigoted, he can hardly fail to feel that it is ridiculous that these two social camps should exist side by side, identical but alien, in a small island whose fortunes and future depend on a pooling of effort and resources. Nor can he fail to find tiresome the inevitable corollary to this situa-

tion, the persistence with which the near whites stress the failings and deficiencies of their darker cousins. "Do they really believe," he asks himself, "that they are, as they claim to be, the direct unclouded descendants of English noblemen and French aristocrats fleeing from the Terror?" He will find it hard to believe in the complete mental honesty of those whose whole life is the perpetual maintenance of a façade.

The situation is moreover made even more tricky for the visitor by the fact that the color bar is fixed in a slightly different way in each separate island. In Grenada it barely exists; in Barbados it is rigidly maintained. Between these two extremes there are varying degrees of strictness—degrees that have been determined by the varying fortunes and histories of each separate island and in particular by the extent to which each island was brought within the influence of the French Revolution.

The French Revolution is indeed, since the landing of Columbus, the most important single event in West Indian history—a contention of whose truth the best evidence is provided by an examination of the three original French islands, Haiti, Martinique and Guadeloupe.

In 1789 no three islands could have had more in common. There they were French and prosperous, sharing the same traditions, owing the same allegiances, the product of the same period and culture. A quarter of a century later they had scarcely a trait in common.

For those three islands, the Fall of the Bastille was a torch tossed upon dry straw. Prosperous though they were, though Haiti was the richest territory in the Caribbean, there had existed for some time in all three of them a gathering atmosphere of discontent. A bankrupt adminis-

tration in Paris, by extorting heavy revenues in tax and tariffs, had created a situation very similar to that which had preceded the revolt of the Thirteen Colonies. The landowners felt they were being milked. There was constant conflict between the officials and the planters. The French system of the unofficial wife had led to the creation of a large half-caste population which resented fiercely the contemptuous treatment it received at the hands of the "white-collar whites." Finally here, as in every other island, there was a simmering atmosphere of rebellion among the slaves. Prosperous though the islands were, every individual member had a grievance of some kind. The French Revolution provided each individual with an opportunity to exploit his grievance.

At the start each section saw the Revolution in terms of its own interests. The landowners saw an opportunity of breaking free from the restrictive measures of the home Government and trading on their own terms, to their own profit. The officials and the white-collar class—*les petits blancs*—saw an opportunity of humbling an arrogant aristocracy. The mulattoes believed that they were to enjoy equal rights and franchise with their fathers. The slaves believed that they were to be freed. Paris was a long way off and no one knew exactly what was happening there. No one knew whether the laws of equality that were being passed for France were applicable to an island whose population consisted in the main of slaves. Paris was very busy. It could only give a small part of its attention to colonial problems. It passed an Act abolishing slavery, then a month later repealed the Act. It sent out commissioners with one set of instructions, then sent out others afterwards contradicting them. Rumor followed upon rumor. No one in the islands knew where his loyalty ought to lie.

Each class knew where its interests lay. There was confusion, there was fighting; in Haiti there was a rising, first of the mulattoes, then of the slaves. When war broke out, the rich landowners in each island, realizing that their privileges and prosperity were imperiled, appealed for help to England. Up to that point in each island a similar set of circumstances had produced a similar result. There the similarity was to cease. The British, though they were beaten off at Haiti—where, in the confused fighting that followed, power was to pass into the hands of the black generals under Toussaint L'Ouverture—captured Martinique and Guadeloupe. For the moment the position in these two islands was the same. Within a very few weeks, however, Guadeloupe was recaptured by a French expedition under Victor Hugues, who freed and armed the slaves, proclaimed the Revolution, set up the guillotine, shot the Royalist rebels, and instituted a four years' terror. Hugues did not, however, succeed in recapturing Martinique.

Until 1801 Martinique was to remain in British hands. It felt none of the effects of the Terror. Its slaves were never freed. There were no massacres, no plunderings. The old colonial traditions were maintained, and though Martinique was returned to France at the Peace of Amiens, it was recaptured early in the Napoleonic Wars, to remain a British island until 1814. In Haiti, on the other hand, the power of the black generals was never broken. When Napoleon tried to reassert French authority, the expedition that he sent out was beaten off, and as a reprisal every white man and woman in the island was put to death. He did succeed in re-establishing white rule and slavery in Guadeloupe, but by then the old colonial traditions had been destroyed during the preceding Terror.

No three islands could have been more alike in 1789;

no three islands could have been less alike in 1815. Haiti was an independent Black Republic with the proud clause drafted into its Constitution: "No white man shall ever place his foot upon this soil with the rights of a master or proprietor." The tricolor flew over Guadeloupe. But the old landowners were dead or scattered. Few had the heart, courage, or inclination to return. The land was split up among peasant proprietors, or owned by limited companies in Paris. Guadeloupe was to recover under the new régime a very real measure of prosperity, but it was no longer a sister island to Martinique, which was to return to its French allegiance in the manner of a Rip van Winkle. For nearly twenty years its planter aristocrats had been cut off from France, and the France to which it was now possible for them to return was their home no longer. France had become a country for which they had little use. Those of their friends who were still alive were unprivileged and dispossessed. They could no longer feel at ease in Paris. Different ideas were in the air. They felt happier, more themselves, in their own green island. They no longer thought of that island as a place where they could amass money to spend in France: Martinique had become their home. They put their money back into the soil; the rich way of life that is typified by the ruins of St. Pierre was spread through the entire island. At a time when the British islands were being drained and impoverished by absenteeism, Martinique, through a reversal of that process, was growing rich.

The different fates of those three islands during that fateful quarter of a century are typical of that essential characteristic of West Indian life—the dependence of each island upon the caprice of history.

No British island—or island that became British during

the Napoleonic period—was affected by the French Revolution to anything like the same degree. But every island was affected to some extent—some to a very great extent.

Most of the Lesser Antilles had come under French rule at one time or another and were susceptible to the mental atmosphere of French events. The Paris Convention offered the assistance of its arms to all peoples ready to fight for freedom. Victor Hugues in Guadeloupe frantically urged the slaves of the British islands to revolt against their masters. There were risings in Grenada, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent. Each rising was accompanied by a firing of estates and a slaughtering of planters, on each occasion in the name of the Revolution, with the watchword of "Liberty, Freedom, and Equality." What happened on a large scale in Guadeloupe happened elsewhere on a smaller scale.

By a natural inevitable process, by the logic as opposed to the caprice of history, the West Indian islands are returning now to the conditions of rule and ownership that existed there before the arrival of the Spaniards; to the rule and ownership, that is to say, of a dark-skinned people. In islands where the colonial traditions of the eighteenth century were broken, if only for a brief time, by the revolt of slaves and the massacres of planters, that process was accelerated. Each island has a different history; the life of each island is in consequence in its own way unique, the product of special circumstances. The visitor to the West Indies needs to know something of the history of each island that he visits if he is to understand completely what he is seeing there.

The West Indian Scene

FLIGHT 201. The car will be leaving in five minutes. Flight 201. Will passengers descend now please."

Flight 201, with a near midnight take-off from LaGuardia. It would have been hard to find a more unglamorous prelude than that half hour of waiting after the weighing in—the long bare hall; the cold blue lights; the desolate deserted counters; the drowsy passengers; the bookless newsstand; the deafening blare every few minutes of ill-articulated orders; the utter lack of what once was advertised as "gracious living." How different from the prewar pourings upon boats, the pile of yellow envelopes, the litter of "Bon Voyage" wrappings. Yet in its way there is a satisfactory quality of dramatic irony about such anonymous departures, just as there was about troop movements in World War II, when you sauntered on the eve of sailing through familiar streets, watching the stir about you of a familiar life, with yourself still seemingly an intrinsic part of it, with none of your friends guessing that by tomorrow you would have ceased to share it with them.

Through the carriage window I watched the flashing of the neon signs; the green lights changing to red then back to green; the taxis pausing, panting, then springing forward; just as I had seen it on the night before from the

Algonquin, just as others would be seeing it tomorrow, with myself two thousand miles away. Maybe this flight by Pan-American was not too inappropriate a prelude to a return after nine years to the Caribbean.

Nine years, it is a long time. And nine such years, 1939-1948. There are not so many places in the world, certainly not in Europe, that are still recognizably what they were; yet back now in New York, after nine weeks' travel my chief impression is of the unchanged nature of it all.

Nothing is really any different, neither in the conditions of living nor the conditions of travel there. As a result of submarine sinkings there is much less shipping, and such ships as run are crowded and unpunctual. But in recompense the Pan-American and British West Indian airlines maintain frequent services. Islands like St. Vincent, Dominica, and Montserrat, which have no airports, are less accessible. But on the whole travel is a great deal easier, provided you travel light.

Certainly the essential framework is the same. Now as then there are two main ways of visiting the Caribbean. You can book a round-trip ticket on a liner that will call for a few hours at practically every island, or you can book to some central island, then operate independently. Before the war the round-trip ticket provided a very popular form of holiday and though at the moment only two shipping lines, the Canadian National and the Alcoa, run depleted services, with accommodation booked a long way ahead, in some respects such a trip is the best way of visiting the islands; it is the easiest, the most restful and the most sociable. You see all the islands and you are long enough in port to visit their most distinctive features. The disadvantage is that a round-trip tour never gives you an oppor-

tunity of entering into the island's life, of appreciating the particular individual charm of the West Indian world, of recognizing the distinctive differences between one island and the next. A month or six weeks' cruise can serve as an admirable introduction to the West Indies, can give an admirable framework for later, more specialized experience; but there is only one real way of savoring the particular West Indian bouquet and that is by living in one of the islands, mixing with the residents and becoming for a time identified with their way of living. You can learn more of the West Indies by spending a week in the smallest island than on a six weeks' pleasure cruise in which you visit fifteen ports. I would recommend that anyone who has made a preliminary cruise and found the climate and feel of the Caribbean congenial should try the experiment of traveling independently by flying to Puerto Rico, Antigua, or Trinidad, then making his own arrangements.

If he does there is one thing that I would advise most strongly and that is not to attempt to plan the trip in any detail. It is impossible to fix up with a New York travel agent a cut and dried itinerary. There are a number of minor sailings between the islands—schooners, launches, and small mail steamers—of which no time tables are ever issued and it is on these sailings that one relies. There is nearly always a means of getting from one island to another, but you can only discover it upon the spot. As it was in 1928 so it was in 1938 and so is it still. If you try to work out in a New York office a scheme by which you will fly south to Antigua, spend ten days there, then divide the remaining three weeks of your holiday between Dominica, Nevis, and Curacoa, you will, after wasting a great many hours over folders, be assured that no such trip is

possible. If however you take a chance, go down to St. Lucia with no forward bookings, and make inquiries on your arrival, you will find yourself able to do four-fifths of what you want. I have nearly always found that some last minute and unlikely sailing will enable me to visit an island that had seemed out of reach; I have also found that in at least one instance there will only prove one way of reaching an island that as the crow flies is a bare sixty miles away and that is by traveling seven sides of an octagon and four hundred miles; again I have always found that there will be one island that there is just no way of reaching or, if reached, of getting from. Usually it is in point of distance the nearest of the lot. You will look at it upon the map, you will stare across the water at the shadowy outline of its mountains. "It is ridiculous," you will say, "that in a modern world I shouldn't be able to get across." But there will be no means of doing so.

One thing at least is certain to go wrong somewhere. No amount of planning in advance will save you from it. So it is just as well not to plan too closely. Once at least you will be unlucky in hotel accommodation. No amount of cabling will guarantee you a bath and balcony. It is as well to book a room in the island that you are using as your headquarters for the first few days but afterwards you might as well trust to luck. As I said before, four-fifths of what you want to do you will do, and you might just as well resign yourself to the missing of that final fifth.

On the whole there are more amenities for the tourist now than there were in 1938. Grenada has two good hotels. In St. Lucia, an enterprising proprietor has taken a ninety-nine-year lease of Pidgeon Island and built a café restaurant. The sand is white and the bay is sheltered. It is ideal for a picnic party. There is also a good boarding-

house hotel in Soufrière, run by two maiden ladies; while "Hot Dog" Antoine runs in Balata, within eight miles of Castries, a roadhouse that can be hired for private parties. St. Vincent now has the Rathmill. Antigua is an air terminus and a good hotel, The Beach, has been built within two miles of the airport. The hotel is right on the sea, faces northeast, and is cool and dry. There are no mosquitoes. The sand is white and powdery, and there is a sandwich bar by the bathing huts. The social life of Antigua has indeed been altered very considerably during the last ten years by the development of this northern section, and American capital is planning to build a large residential club on the Mill Reef estate, next to Half Moon Bay.

From the windows of the Antigua Beach hotel you look upon the ochre brown roofs of the American Naval Base. At the moment about a thousand Marines are stationed there. But their presence has made surprisingly little difference to the island's life. During the war when there were several thousands there, in Antigua as in St. Lucia, the base contributed very largely to a general gaiety, a general quickening of life. But now the Marines keep very much to themselves. Their time schedule makes it difficult for them to fit into the Antiguan pattern. They dine early, and their movie show starts at a quarter to seven, at the very moment when the West Indian is starting his second round of swizzles. Unless in fact I had seen the barracks from my bedroom window I should not have known there was a naval base there.

I had expected that the presence of American bases would have altered the social life of the West Indies; but the only real social difference I found was in a general lessening of formality. I wore dinner clothes only four times in two months. The atmosphere of Government

House is very much livelier than it was. I am in my fiftieth year and should by now under any circumstances have ceased to regard with awe the ritual and decorum of G.H. But it is not simply that I am ten years older than I was in 1938 but that their various "excellencies" and "honors" are ten years younger. I was for instance delighted to find as Commissioner of Montserrat an old friend who is so much my junior that I doubt if he was able to do much more than toddle at a time when I was in uniform during the First World War. The administrators of St. Lucia and Dominica are both under forty, while the Governor of the Leeward Islands is an exact contemporary whom I have long held in affection and respect.

All this is part of a new policy. The choice of Oliver Baldwin for the Leeward Islands—a very important post—was criticized in some quarters on the grounds that it was a political appointment, but it was welcomed by the people as another refreshing proof of a new colonial practice of appointing to the West Indies men of character and courage, who have their careers ahead of them and are not afraid of making a mistake. For too long the islands have suffered—and well are the islanders aware of it—through their affairs having been in the hands of professional diplomats at the close of their careers, who are desperately anxious to get through their last three years "without unpleasantness," whose main concern is not the welfare of their parish, but the K.C.M.G. that will cast a sunset glory on their retirement. The islanders welcome keen young men who want to get things done in place of tired old men who want to avoid awkward situations. The presence of such younger men at Government House spreads a livelier atmosphere throughout the entire colony.

In most ways I found the islands even more congenial than I had ten years ago, and that is saying a great, great deal. To the American and British tourist they have, it seems to me, everything to offer at the time of year when our own climates are at their worst—between January and April. During those three months the sugar islands provide every type of sport—sailing and swimming, cricket and golf, and tennis, fishing, shooting, riding. They can accommodate the dimensions and needs of the longest as of the shortest purse. The cost of living varies with each island and the various sections of each island. Jamaica is the most expensive in the group. Charges in Montego Bay are as astronomic as they are in Havana and Palm Beach. Yet even in Jamaica it is possible to live in very real comfort at a very reasonable cost, while life is as cheap in the smaller islands as it is anywhere in the world, daily pension hotel rates varying between four dollars a day and five. The extras are inconsiderable. The best liqueur whisky is available at three dollars a bottle, Barbadian rum is plentiful at a dollar twenty-five, and when the sun is shining there is not a great deal to spend money on. By day you idle on a beach; in the evening you sip cocktails on a veranda. One day becomes the next.

Nor could the climate during those three months conceivably be better. It is hot to the extent that a man wears ducks or Palm Beach clothes by day and a white dinner jacket in the evening. He would feel overweighted by a flannel suit, but there is no equivalent for the overpowering dry heat of Iraq or for the exhausting damp heat of Malaya. Trinidad is the only island that has a sticky climate, but even in Trinidad there is a cool breeze at night. There is very little malaria and mosquitoes are

rarely troublesome. At one time in Martinique and in St. Lucia a very venomous snake—the *fer de lance*—made cross-country journeys inadvisable, but the introduction of the mongoose has removed that pest. There is a certain amount of rain. But the showers are brief and violent. You are quite likely to get soaked, but you are very unlikely to have your plans for a whole day ruined. It is prudent to wear a hat, but there is no need to worry about sunstroke. There is really no snag about the West Indian climate, its greatest merit for the tourist being that he does not need to take special precautions about anything. "Oldest inhabitants" may warn him against the danger of drinking alcohol before sundown or taking exercise between ten and four, but oldest inhabitants are always anxious to give one "the benefit of their experience." They are always urging the necessity of this and that. I have never been to a place in which I have not been assured by someone that I must avoid that, that I must take this precaution, and in most places I have found that by doing what I am in the habit of doing normally, with such modifications as in a different climate one's own inclinations will suggest, I have managed pretty well. Certainly I felt very fit in the West Indies in spite of punches before lunch and exercise between two and four. My advice to anyone visiting the West Indies is very simple: take several spare shirts and provide yourself with letters of introduction.

Letters of introduction are absolutely essential if the tourist is to get the most out of a West Indian trip, particularly in the British islands. He can have, I will admit, a whole lot of fun without them. He can relax into an agreeable routine of sunbathing and picnics. He will make friends at his hotel and he will be unlucky if he does not in the course of a week make contact by chance with at

least one resident, who will invite him to his house and introduce him to the clubs. If he were to make a longish stay, that single contact would lead to other contacts, so that by the end of a month he would be leading a varied and amusing social life. But most visitors have not the time to spend as much as a month in any single island, and if you are limited to a fortnight's stay, it is essential, at any rate in a British island, if you are anxious to see what its real life is, to arrive with letters of introduction.

Colonies are usually, after all, more consciously national than a mother country. And life in a British West Indian island is a very family affair, reproducing the essential characteristics of English life. The British islands are all of them Crown colonies, directly responsible to Parliament, and the responsibility of Parliament. The Crown is represented by a governor—or in the smaller islands by an administrator who is the governor's representative. In most of the islands there is some slight difference in the actual machinery of government, but the general system is to have an elected house of assembly, which petitions a legislative council, half of whose members are selected by the governor. The life of the island is centered round Government House, and a letter of introduction to the governor or administrator is of the greatest possible assistance. It does not involve the visitor in tedious formalities. On the contrary, it saves him a great deal of time. The A.D.C. will be able to put him into touch with those of the residents who share his tastes and interests. Even if he has not a letter to the governor, the visitor who plans to make a stay of a week or more should certainly in the case of the smaller islands sign the Government House book on his arrival. It is also wise for the visitor to foreign territory to call upon his country's representative. It is good manners

and is also a prudent act. We all have our opposite numbers everywhere; the sooner we find them the sooner we can be introduced by them to whatever is most congenial to us in a new town or country. I have made stays long enough in nine British West Indian islands to feel that I have got inside the atmosphere of the island's life, and Jamaica is the only one of the nine in which I do not feel that it is necessary to be introduced. I had a good deal more fun in Jamaica through arriving with such letters, but I could have managed quite well without them. Jamaica is a vast playground, with its golf courses and its beaches and its *grande luxe* hotels; the life of the residents is apart and separate from the tourist's world. I spent ten days at Montego Bay which were as good as any ten days that I have ever spent, sunbathing and swimming and gossiping and dancing. And I am doubtful if I saw one resident during that whole period. Jamaica, however, is exceptional. In the other islands I am very sure that I should have had a bare quarter of the fun I did if I had not arrived with letters.

It is only natural, after all, that that should be so. The English way of life has been built round a tradition of entertaining inside the home. The pre-war casual visitor to London, Continental or American, rarely found much to attract him there. There were no sidewalk cafés. Pubs closed at ten; only on extension nights could he drink in restaurants after half past twelve. There was no night life in the sense that Paris and New York and the Berlin of the 1920's understood the word. Everything closed early. Such places as stayed open asked him if he was a member. The only after-hours places that were accessible to the foreigner were squalid, subterranean, furtive and expensive. London has never catered for the tourist. London belongs to Lon-

doners. And to those like myself who have been born there, who always, whatever their official address may be, regard London as their home, London even in the drab and shabby 1940's has a dignity and charm, a personal lived-in quality that no other city has. But you have to be a Londoner or an adopted Londoner to appreciate it. London is a city of clubs and private houses. You have to be a member. And though there are those who will argue that London is not England, London is the home of several million Englishmen. A national capital is the expression of national traits and character. As London is, so, in my opinion, England is. And just as I cannot understand how a tourist coming to London as a stranger without friends could enjoy his visit, so I should be surprised if anyone who went there with appropriate contacts, and stayed long enough to get below its skin, did not find much to like. To love London, the foreigner has to see it as Londoners themselves see it, to become temporarily identified with the London way of life.

As it is in London, as it is in England, so is it in the British colonies. The good times are centered in clubs and private houses, with which one must get in touch fully to enjoy oneself.

It is very easy to get in touch. The residents are invariably welcoming, invariably hospitable, invariably ready to take the visitor into their homes. And it is a very pleasant life into which one is introduced, a way of life whose particular charm is more readily appreciated, or of whose nature perhaps I should say it is easier to get a complete picture, in the smaller than in the larger islands.

In the smaller islands everything is more compact; it is easier to see the working of the machine. During the greater part of World War II I was employed in counter-

espionage in the Middle East. For most of the time I was a captain. When I was stationed in Cairo I only understood the working of my own small section. It is one of the first rules of an intelligence organization that no one should be told more than is strictly necessary for him to carry out the particular task that he has been assigned. The work of military intelligence is divided up into a number of separate specialist sections. Employed as I was on a G.3 level, I did not understand while I was in Cairo how the activities of the various branches dovetailed so that the higher-ranking officers could form a complete picture of what had been found out, what had been deduced and what action was being taken.

In Bagdad, however, the General Staff was so much smaller that the work of a branch that in Cairo required a section of ten intelligence officers headed by a colonel could be done by a major and a lieutenant. Month by month during the three years I spent there, the establishments were reduced, so that at times the work of three branches would be concentrated in a single office. In Bagdad I not only knew personally every officer who was engaged in counter-espionage but I had a rough, though not, of course, a detailed, idea of what he did. By the time I left Bagdad I had acquired a sense of the general pattern of military intelligence that could not, I think, have been acquired in Cairo by anyone under the rank of colonel.

In the same way, it is much easier to get a sense of the West Indian pattern by visiting Grenada than Barbados, and I would recommend every tourist to make a stay of at least a week in one of the smaller islands. The inclination, naturally, is to see as many different islands as possible in the limited time available—and the distinct differences that exist between every island make this a reasonable program.

At the same time, a too close following of that program prevents a visitor from recognizing the one common multiple of all these islands—the framework of English colonial life. Different though every island is, in this one respect they are alike. They have the same social framework, the same formula for living, so that were a prospective tourist to say to me, “Tell me, what kinds of thing should I be doing there?” I should be able out of my memories of many islands to describe for him a typical West Indian day.

He would wake, I should tell him, shortly after six in a large, bare hotel bedroom. The sunlight striking through the shutters would be designing a zebra pattern on the walls and ceiling. He would throw back the shutters and walk out on to his balcony. The sun would be warm upon his cheeks, but a cool breeze would be blowing from the hills. In the street below Negro women would be on their way to market with baskets of bananas on their heads. Across the road an untidy garden would be bright with yellow cassia. The road itself would be a narrow, mounting one, on the one side climbing into the mountains in whose shelter the town is built, on the other side running down towards the sea. Above the stretch of its gray-tiled and corrugated iron roofs he will see the gray-blue stretches of the harbor. Square-sailed fishing boats will be tacking near the shore. A launch carrying coastal cargo will be chunking its slow way between them. Shadowy on the horizon is the outline of another island.

The washing arrangements are likely to be primitive. At the end of a passage there will be a rickety and communal set of showers, but there will be no running water in his room. Hot water is not necessary. After taking his shower, he will sit on his balcony, watching the slow parade below him of the island's life, savoring the day's fresh-

est hour, till the maid arrives with the cup of tea that in the West Indies as in England is the invariable prelude to a substantial porridge and bacon and eggs breakfast in the dining room.

It is possible that an expedition will have been arranged for him. Most islands have their own special "sight" where history has tarried. St. Kitts has Brimstone Hill, Antigua has English Harbor where Nelson was stationed for so many dreary months. No island is without its forts and battlements. Or perhaps he is to be taken out into the country to see the working of an estate. The islands are almost exclusively agricultural. The Spaniards came to the New World in search of gold, but the gold that they found in Haiti had no depth or value and the mines they sank there were soon abandoned. Oil has been found in Trinidad in great abundance. Trinidad also has further mineral resources through the pitch lake which provides a good deal of the world's asphalt. But the fortunes of the other islands depend upon agricultural produce, on sugar and rum and cotton, copra and cocoa, bananas, nutmegs, limes and cloves, grapefruit and arrowroot.

A car will call for the tourist shortly after breakfast. He will be driven by a mounting, circling road into the hills. The valleys will be bright with sugar cane. The bush will be dotted with wattle and corrugated iron shacks. Here and there he will see the ruined masonry of an aqueduct or gateway. A steady succession of women with baskets upon their heads will pass him on their way to market; their blouses of red and yellow are vivid splashes of color against the deep green of the hills.

In Trinidad and Grenada he will be taken to see the working of the cocoa. He will be shown how in every island the laborers work in teams, husband and wife together,

the man snipping off the pods with a long knife, the woman piercing them with a stroke of her pointed cutlass, carrying them in a basket on her head, then, when the basket is full, the man cutting open the pods and the woman shelling them. Eight baskets of pods supply one basket of seeds, and four baskets is a good day's work per team. The cocoa seeds are white and sticky, and they are put out to sweat for eight days under leaves. The visitor will see them being moved from one sweater to another. Then, when they have been sweated, they are dried for a further period of eight days. The visitor will see them laid out on shallow trays that are run out on wheels. He will watch the trampling of the seeds for polish in large, circular cauldrons by laughing, sweating laborers with their trousers rolled about their knees. In just that same way, he will tell himself, was cocoa dried and polished two hundred years ago. A few estates have special drying devices which save time when the weather is wet, but ordinarily the methods of the old plantation days are still observed.

And the planter will point out to him, just as his predecessors would have done, the various odd chores that are required on an estate. He will show the women employed on weeding in specially measured plots, the men digging ditches and repairing roads, and the old women scouring for the "black cocoa," the dried and rotten pods that can be used for fuel. Just as in the old slave days, the laborers are allowed their gardens by which they supplement their earnings.

In St. Vincent the visitor will be taken out to see the working of the arrowroot on which, in addition to sea island cotton, the island's prosperity depends. There is something very untropical about it all. You could fancy yourself in England. Arrowroot is planted in sloping fields.

Rising to a height of four feet, it has a flower that you can scarcely see. Wild yellow flowers grow over and about it. In the late autumn, when the flower shrivels, the diggers start to work upon the roots. These are ground by a seemingly endless process of washing and of straining. The factories are as clean as dairies; there is a ceaseless roar of water as the arrowroot is passed from butts to strainers, then to the settling tables. In some factories a process of centrifugal force is used by which the white starch grows gradually dark as the impure matter is forced into a crust that can be cut away, leaving the starch clear, ready to be taken to the drying house and stretched on wire.

In the old days the sugar plantations were adorned with windmills. Now busy bustling engines have supplanted them. The engines are less picturesque, but the general process is the same. There is the same squeezing and pressing of the canes between a row of rollers till the last drop of juice has been extracted, to run into the great clarifiers of the boiler house to seethe under the heat of a fire that is maintained a degree or two below boiling point, till the white scum blisters to the surface and the coppers can be filled with the pure, almost transparent liquid.

The traveler of today, watching the laborers sweep the rising foam with skimmers as the liquor boils, can easily in that heated room with the thick, heavy smell of molasses in his nostrils imagine himself back in the old days, watching, as Monk Lewis watched, the froth rising into large clean bubbles, while his Negroes tested the liquid to know when it was fit for striking, taking up a small portion with their thumbs, drawing it as the heat diminished into a thread with their forefingers; then when the thread snapped and shrank from the thumb to the forefinger, judging

by its length whether the order to strike could yet be shouted.

Thus it was in the old days, when the thick molasses in the curing house used to drip slowly through the spongy plantain stalk into the tank below, into the thick and golden juice that time would foment and mellow into the rich dark wine of the Antilles. Thus it was in the old days, and it is not so very different now. As the traveler follows the planter from one group of laborers to another, it is not difficult for him to re-create the atmosphere of the old plantations.

He will at the same time have an opportunity of appreciating the conditions and nature of the planter's life. Usually the planter is a West Indian by birth. He is rarely the owner of the estate. He is the salaried or commissioned agent of someone who has a store in town and a large bungalow halfway up the hill, a man who is himself, most likely, the salaried or commissioned agent of a public company with head offices in London or in Bristol.

In many ways the planter's is a monotonous existence. His day will begin at sunrise. By half past seven, after a light first breakfast of coffee and fruit and toast, he will be at his *boucan* for the rollcall. His work is mainly supervisory. He walks round the estate, interviewing his overseers, gossiping for a few moments with his laborers. He is out till after eleven, when he returns to his bungalow for breakfast, a kind of lunch with coffee or tea taking the place of beer. He may find his mail there awaiting him and a newspaper from the capital. He will probably doze after his meal, but by two he will be again at work. When he returns at half past four for tea, he will have had six and a half hours in the fields, and his day is not yet finished.

There are his accounts, and his reports, and his correspondence. By the time dusk falls he is ready enough for his rum or whisky.

There is unlikely to be a club within close range of him. He will either be expecting a neighboring call or he will be driving out with his wife to a friend's bungalow.

It will be to a friend, probably, that he has seen two or three times a week for the last five to fifteen years. Their friendship is one entirely of propinquity. They have no secrets from one another. They have nothing new to say to one another. They will gossip about the price of cocoa, the cost of labor, a party at G.H., the report of the last commission, their plans next summer for a trip to England; such gossip as he has exchanged with this or the other friend, in that or the other bungalow every night for the last fifteen years; but as he sits there on the veranda, in the warm and scented dusk, with fireflies flickering over the tobacco plants, in the pleasant fatigue that follows on a long day's work, with the rich, heavy rum spreading its warmth along his veins, he will become minute by minute wrapped about in a sense of comradeship with this man who understands his problems, who shares so many of those problems, with whom he has no need to assume pretenses, with whom he can be himself. And as he surrenders to the charitable influences of the hour, his personal plans show in a more roseate light. Surely, he thinks, the slump has reached its curve. Next year surely the boom—the long-propheesied boom—will come; there will be a bonus and dividends. He really will be able to take at last that trip to England that he has been talking about for five winters now. And the swizzle stick will rattle against the ice. And he will sit there hopeful, confident and happy, till his wife from the other end of the veranda reminds him that dinner

cannot be served one minute after half past eight.

Almost directly after dinner he will go to bed.

And the next day it will be all begun again, and maybe when he returns for his breakfast at eleven it will be to find among his mail a gloomy forecast of the next year's trading. The slump has not yet reached its curve. There will be no bonus and no dividends, and he would no doubt be wise to put off for another year his plans for that trip to England and, taking instead a shorter view, arrange to come into town for the next race meeting, staying on afterwards for a week or so. Perhaps he might even manage a fortnight in Barbados.

It is a monotonous and often a dispiriting existence. It is not surprising that the planter should grow despondent sometimes, as season follows season with the wearisome regularity of a climate that always does what you expect of it—so many days of the short dry period, so many of the wet, then the long dry season, then the hurricanes; with the slumps growing longer and more frequent, with the prospects of "that holiday in England" growing more remote. It would not be surprising if he did not lose heart sometimes and become defeatist. His welcome of the tourist will be no less cordial on that account, however; it will even be more cordial, since the arrival of a visitor is an agreeable break in a monotonous routine. He will make an occasion, a party of it.

On mornings when no such excursion has been planned, the tourist will have after breakfast a couple of hours to himself. Except in the three larger islands, there is no such thing in the West Indies as a leisured class. All the men are employed in some capacity, in stores or offices or in Government service. But usually by half past ten a number of

young women will be in the mood for an ice or a cup of coffee or a swim.

In most of the islands there will be two clubs in the capital: a town club which is exclusively masculine, where the men will talk shop over their rum punches before going home to lunch; and a country club which is the main social center, which has tennis courts and perhaps a golf course, which is picturesquely sited often on the edge of the savannah. But it is in the evening that the life of the island is centered there. The tourist's morning date will be in town.

About most West Indian towns there is a similarity of appearance. Their setting is invariably magnificent, a succession of high hills rising above a harbor with charming residential bungalows dotted along their slopes. But the shops and streets and offices that are grouped about the port are unattractive. Once they were stone-built and tiled and handsome. But they have been the victims, nearly all of them, of hurricanes and earthquakes. Today they are for the most part ramshackle improvisations of wood and corrugated iron, shabby where they are not squalid, with little sense of dignity or of the past, with ragged beggars sleeping in their shadows. Most of the larger stores will have a teashop attached to them, and it is probably in one of these that the tourist will find himself sitting over an ice on mornings when he is not driving out into the country. Perhaps, however, his friends will have some special and unlikely rendezvous. My two chief friends in St. Lucia used, for example, to meet every morning in a windowless room opening out of a grocery which they called "Hell's Kitchen"; they went there, they explained, because they were tired of seeing the same people everywhere they went. In practically every capital there is an excellent bathing

beach. I have never known better bathing than in the West Indies. There are none of the coral and sea urchins against which in Tahiti you have to be so much upon your guard that it is foolish to bathe barefooted. The water is fresher and has more bite than the Mediterranean's. There is no reason to be afraid of sunstroke, and the precautions that you take against sunburn on the Riviera are adequate in the Caribbean. An hour on the beach will be an excellent prelude to a rum punch. Rum is the *vin du pays* of the Caribbean and there are two main ways of serving it. It can be drunk, of course, in the evening, if it is good, as whisky is, with water or with soda as a highball. But the two distinctive West Indian uses for it are as a punch or swizzle. The swizzle is a kind of cocktail and is drunk always in the evening. Whatever proportions of sweet and sour may be compounded with it, the prevailing flavor is of angostura bitters. It was in Trinidad that angostura was invented, and its secret formula is still held there by the Siegert family. In London a bottle of angostura will last you for a year. In the West Indies it will last a month. The swizzle is mixed in a jug. Angostura is added till the liquid is a pale pink; then it is beaten, not stirred, with a swizzle stick, a thin stick a foot and a half long, clustered at the head with a bunch of divided twigs. The stick is rotated swiftly between the palms of the hands till the mixture froths. It should be gulped, not sipped.

The punch is a very different matter. It is a pre-lunch drink. It is sweetish; it is served in a small tumbler and should be sipped. There is no shaking or stirring. Sugar and lime and rum and water are mixed on the old formula of "one of sweet and two of sour," grated nutmeg is scattered on the surface, angostura is dashed across it. It is a noble drink. It is a pity that the lunch which follows is not

more often worthy of it. Meals in British West Indian hotels are, it must be admitted, frankly disappointing.

The English as a race are not enterprising gastronomically. They are afraid of local dishes and ask to be given abroad the same meals that they enjoy at home. Hotel proprietors catering for this taste concentrate upon fried dolphin and on joints. They usually overcook the meat, which would not under the best conditions be very satisfactory, since, owing to a lack of cold storage, it is usually eaten on the day that it is killed. The local vegetables—yams, sweet potatoes, breadfruit, plantains—are starchily flavorless. Only the fruit—pawpaws and soursop and avocado pears—is really appetizing. That is not to say that there are not a number of excellent West Indian dishes to be sampled; Dominica and Montserrat have their mountain chicken—a kind of bullfrog. St. Lucia has the *Ramier*, an excellent strongly flavored dark-fleshed bird. Barbados has its “pepper pot.” In Trinidad admirable small oysters grow on marine trees. There is also a spinach and crab soup called *callaloo*. The East Indian influence and the intelligent use of spices makes Trinidadian cooking more sophisticated than that of the other islands, and Jean de Boissiere has collected in his book, *Creole Cooking*, a number of appetizing recipes. In private houses throughout the islands, where the local spices are properly employed one eats extremely well. But lunch in the average small hotel, though ample and nourishing, leaves no memory on the palate.

The siesta follows.

The three hours after tea are the most delightful of the day. It is then that the tennis courts are crowded, that nets are pitched on the cricket field, that caddies are summoned

to the links. The heat of the day has lessened, a breeze is blowing from the hills. There seems to be more color in the flowers; the leaves and grasses that by day had become polished surfaces to reflect the sunlight resume their own fresh greens. All day one has walked at the pace of a slow-motion film. At last one can move with freedom. One has the sense of having one's limbs restored to one. And later, in the swift fallen dusk, it is with a contented feeling of languor that one sits out on the veranda of the club over one's swizzle.

The conversation will follow an habitual routine: there will be local gossip, there will be discussion of the latest party at G.H., there will be commercial talk of the price of cocoa, of the slump in sugar. Political talk will be concentrated on the policy of the Imperial Government towards the colonies. It is conversation in which the tourist can take little part. At the start of the evening he will be asked, for good manners' sake, a number of questions about his trip, about "how are things at home," but unless he is an extrovert, unless he is prepared to dominate the conversation and become its center, he will gradually find himself slipping into the background; which probably he will be glad to do, since he is here to learn, to absorb an atmosphere, to receive rather than to create impressions.

He will sit back in his chair, watching and listening, sipping at his swizzle, letting his attention wander, noticing sights and sounds that to the residents are too familiar to be remarked, noting how the dark green of the mountains changes into purple, watching the fireflies dart above the flowers, hearing the croak of the frogs and in the hills the distant beat of drums; he will be conscious of the heavy smell of jasmine.

A West Indian day ends as it begins, at an early hour.

For the visitor arriving with letters of introduction, the ninety minutes after sundown on the club veranda will be followed sometimes by a dinner party—a formal party at which the women will wear long dresses and the men boiled shirts; but such parties are exceptional to the general routine of a West Indian day. There is no night life in an urban sense, and except on occasions, most residents who have been up since dawn, who have done a full day's work and taken two hours' exercise, are glad to go to bed directly after dinner.

The ninety minutes on the club veranda represent the climax of the day. It is to this hour and a half that the memory of the tourist will return in retrospect. How often during the war when evening fell upon bomb-scarred London or on the brown, burned wastes of the Syrian desert have I not dreamed myself back on to a long veranda looking out on the row of palms that flanked a broad green savannah.

“Typical Dominica”

I WAS RETURNING, I said, to the West Indies to see what changes had been brought about in the smaller British islands by six years of war, three years of economic crisis, and the lease in certain islands of air bases to the U.S.A. I had also a special project—to revisit Dominica. Of all the islands that I had seen on my first trip, it was the one that I had liked the least; at the same time it was the one I was most anxious to see again; a contradiction that is typical of Dominica, whose saga is a long succession of inconsistencies.

Every fact about it is self-contradictory. The third largest of the British West Indian possessions, it supports one of the smallest populations. Though its soil is extremely fertile, only a small proportion of its surface is under cultivation. Though it possesses in Rupert's Bay a superb natural harbor, its capital stands at Roseau in an open roadstead. One of the loveliest islands in the world, its beauties are hidden for weeks on end by cloud. Its beauty has indeed proved a liability. Its beauty is an effect of mountains and its mountains by attracting rain have deluged the interior with such floods that no road has been built across the island and no road has been built round the island. Two thirds of the windward coast are cut off from the capital.

For many years the island has been in the red. Its ill luck has been persistent and its ill luck has been accompanied by ill management. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the island was put up for sale in lots by the British Crown. The sale realized over a million dollars. Not one cent of this sum was reinvested in the island. It was used instead for Queen Charlotte's dowry. In the 1840's coffee was a highly successful product, but disease destroyed the crops. Limes were planted, and Rose's lime juice became an internationally accepted label, while planters on the windward coast produced a concentrated lime juice from which citric acid was extracted and which could be stored safely until an opportunity came of shipping it. In the 1920's, however, withertip disease damaged, in many cases irremediably, the lime plantations, and the discovery in Italy of a synthetic method of producing citric acid made the marketing of the Dominican product no longer profitable. When the Panama Canal was opened, Dominica by its geographical position should have become the coaling station for British ships, but because owing to the malarial nature of the northern section the capital had been built at Roseau instead of Rupert's Bay, St. Lucia got the contract.

Before the First World War a Royal mail steam packet toured the island weekly, collecting cargo and carrying passengers. The service was not resumed after the war, and planters on the windward coast had to rely on schooners and on canoes. For weeks on end the sea would be too rough for schooners to put in to shore.

Work was begun on what was imposingly christened the Imperial Road, a broad surfaced thoroughfare that was planned to link the windward and the leeward coasts. Heavy rain, floods, and mounting costs delayed, curtailed

and finally liquidated the enterprise. Then came the hurricanes of 1928 and 1930.

The windward coast never recovered from these hurricanes. One by one the big plantations were abandoned; there is not now a single plantation house between Hatton Garden and Pointe Mulatre. The estates are worked spasmodically by peasant proprietors who "head" their produce across the mountains, supply local needs, or await the caprice of schooners.

During World War II the saga of ill luck continued. It was typical Dominican luck that the island through lack of a suitable airbase should have been cut off completely from the general atmosphere of war, should have made no direct contribution to the war effort, should have been isolated from the main currents of American and English thought, receiving none of the mental stimulus of being allied with great events. At the same time it suffered very definite war damage. It was typical Dominican luck that situated as it is between two French islands, it should have had to accommodate several thousand refugees, only a very small proportion of whom were honest adherents of the Free French cause, who, demanding a daily meat meal, created a cattle shortage that still continues. The interior economy of the island, a very delicately adjusted organism, was seriously disturbed.

Ill luck was accompanied by ill management. The blockade of Madagascar created a market for vanilla, but the traders profited so imprudently in this unexpected boom that they shipped inferior and unripened pods. American buyers now distrust Dominican produce.

It was decided finally that Dominica should be linked by air with the other islands. So an expert on aeronautics was sent to locate an airfield. He selected a strip on the

northeast coast. The immediate disadvantages of this site were obvious. Not only was it already occupied with a valuable coconut plantation, but it had no direct communication with the capital. Passengers would have to motor to Portsmouth, then go by launch to Roseau, a journey which would take at least four hours. The expert maintained, however, that no other site was suitable, so the coconut palms were felled, a vast quantity of stones collected by hand labor, and simultaneously, so that there should be direct access from the airport to the capital, work was resumed on the Imperial Road. The labor and capital of the island were concentrated on these two projects. For a year the work continued. Then, when the air strip had been cleared and a valuable plantation ruined, a second aeronautic expert decreed that the site chosen was unsuitable for aircraft. Simultaneously it was discovered that the sum of money voted for the completion of the Imperial Road was quite inadequate, so that today for the expenditure of half a million dollars and the slaughter of several thousand palm trees there is nothing to show except a track of cobbles through the jungle and on the flanks of the mutilated Melville Hall estate, three or four admittedly impressive piles of hand gathered flints.

"Typical Dominica," was the comment in St. Lucia.

"Typical Dominica." It is a comment and a criticism that you will often hear made in the other islands.

They will make it laughingly on a note of mockery, of affectionate, fraternal mockery. There is a Dominica legend in the Caribbean.

"Everyone goes crazy there," they say. "All that rain and those mountains shutting them in and everything going wrong. Did you hear about that fellow who tried to dig a

hole through the center of the earth, because his wife was buried in Australia? He dug it with a cutlass, carrying the earth up in a calabash. You can still see the hole. That's typical."

It is typical, they will also say, that the island should have attracted so many English and American eccentrics, that square pegs after long efforts to fit themselves into round holes should have made their homes there. Dominica is the only small island with an expatriate colony. It has been called "The Tahiti of the Caribbean."

I visited Dominica first in February, 1929, a few weeks after the first hurricane had struck it.

I stayed a week. It rained incessantly. Roseau even in the sunlight is a scrubby little place. It is clean, but that is the most that can be said of it. It has no harbor; it happens to be the capital only because it is there that the chief valley meets the sea. Seven blocks long and eight blocks wide, it is a cluster of small two-story houses built on stone foundations which have contrived to resist successive hurricanes because, it is claimed, at the time when they were built it was the practice to mix syrup with the mortar. Unpainted wooden balconies project over the sidewalks; there are no gardens, no trees, no flowers.

There are admittedly a few attractive corners, particularly in the south, where a number of fine trees stand on a slight prominence of ground and police headquarters are housed in an old fort. The veranda of the library has a charming view of the bay and of Scot's Head. Beyond the Botanical Gardens, which are really fine, you can climb to the summit of Morne Bruce and see in the Roseau valley the lime trees of the Bath estate, stretching in even rows to be divided every so many yards by the windbreaks of

the galba trees. There are attractive corners. But in a morning you can see them all.

I made a trip by foot and horse across the island. The mountains were concealed in cloud; incessant rain symbolized adversity. In *Hot Countries* I compared the scenery to a reading of Endymion. "Like Endymion," I wrote, "it is lush and featureless. Like Endymion it becomes monotonous. Hour after hour it is the same."

I was there for carnival. There were cocktail parties every night. I was meeting for the first time the "sour cocktail" of which Angostura bitters is the chief ingredient. Compounded of rum, it is mixed in a large jug, and beaten with a swizzle stick until it froths. It is pretty and pink, and looks like liquid candy. But it is very sour. It cannot be sipped. It should be gulped while it is frothing. I had not yet acquired the knack of gulping swizzles. Round followed round, exhaustingly and bewilderingly. It was the only time in my life when I found myself defeated by straightforward run-of-the-mill drinking. In a sense it was all extremely gay but beneath the gaiety I was conscious of an almost desperate defeatism. Dominica seemed to be flinging up the sponge: the hurricane was being accepted as the final straw. There was no point in trying any longer. The island was in the red for keeps. It was up to the Imperial Exchequer to take care of it.

I had some good times in Dominica. I made two real friends there. But even so I was glad to get away. I was depressed by the all-pervading apathy. Yet in retrospect, in continuing terms of that framework of anomalies and contradictions, out of all the islands I had visited it was of Dominica that I found myself thinking most. I kept feeling that it was my own fault, that it was due to some deficiency in myself that I had got so little from my visit. Dominica

had something, I suspected, which the other islands lacked, something which I had failed to find.

I was to hear much talk of Dominica during the 1930's. In London and New York, the Dominica legend was taking shape. The expatriate colony was growing. Stephen Haweis, for example, went there, and Elma Napier and John Knapp. Stephen Haweis, the son of a distinguished Victorian clergyman, is an excellent and well known painter. Elma Napier, the daughter of Sir William Gordon Cumming, one of the chief figures in the Tranby Croft baccarat scandal, widely traveled and the authoress of several books, is very much a person in her own right. The name John Knapp will not convey anything to those who did not know him personally. A scholarly, well bred American, at one time a schoolmaster at Groton, he never attempted to make anything of his life. He was a complete escapist. But he was a gifted and a charming man. I had met him in Tahiti. Outside his house, a notice board announced in high white lettering that visitors were not welcome. He sought solitude and privacy. He failed to find them in Tahiti. He did find them in Dominica.

In England I was to meet Jean Rhys. Her novels have not reached to a large public, but they have a personal flavor. Jean Rhys in her writing is herself and no one else. There are no echoes. The central character in her best known novel is a composed and assured person, unable to fit herself into organized society, who recognizes this idiosyncrasy in herself and is undisturbed by it. She told me she had been born in Dominica. Rereading *After Leaving Mr. Mackenzie*, I could see how many flashbacks to Dominica—imperceptible to the unacquainted reader—occurred in it. I could see how Dominica had colored her

temperament and outlook. It was a clue to her, just as she was a clue to it. People who could not fit into life elsewhere found what they were looking for in Dominica. Jean Rhys, who had been born there, chose as her central character one who could not adjust herself to life outside.

Dominica clearly had something which the other islands lacked. When I came back on this first post-war visit to the Caribbean, I was resolved that whatever else I might be forced to miss, I would not hurry my second visit there.

It is not easy to get to Dominica. It is almost impossible to get there comfortably. It has no airport. There are fewer ships now on Caribbean routes. By no means all of them stop at Dominica. The ships sailing from the north are booked solid with round-trip passengers. Inter-island passengers have to travel "deck" unless the casual sailing of a schooner or a motor launch coincides with their time schedule. It is idle to pretend that traveling in a small motor launch, in the open sea, on a rough day is pleasant.

I was lucky in that I was making the journey from St. Lucia, an island so close that there are those who claim to have seen it from Scot's Head. I was lucky, too, in that mine was a morning sailing, that I had not to spend a night aboard. It was a bright clear day. From the decks of the *Lady Nelson* I could pick out the bays and valleys of Martinique; Diamond Rock glittered in the sunlight. For once there were no clouds over Mt. Pelé; its jagged summit lifted over the skeleton of St. Pierre, the deep track of its lava running brown towards the sea. As we passed out of the protection of the land, the ship began to rock. There is a heavy swell in the twenty-mile channel between Dominica and Martinique. I was grateful that I was not mak-

ing the journey in a schooner. Slowly the tall shadows of Dominica became distinct.

Always before I had arrived in darkness. I had never seen how cozily the little villages of Soufrière and Pointe Michele cluster about their churches. It was the first time I had seen Dominica in the sunlight. I had not believed that anything could be so green. I had never thought of green as being a color that could dazzle you. I had not believed there could be so many shades of green, that a single color could combine so many varieties of tone and texture, could achieve such an effect of patchwork.

Very often one's first hours in a place set the tone for an entire visit. This happened now. As I was about to clamber down the gangplank, a young man in shorts and an open shirt pushed his way towards me.

"You are Mr. Alec Waugh?" he asked.

"I am."

"Fine! I was afraid I'd missed you. I'm taking you up to Springfield."

"Where's Springfield?"

"John Archbold's place."

"Who's John Archbold?"

"A planter here. He's expecting you for cocktails."

I had never heard either of John Archbold or of Springfield. The man who was proposing to take me there was white and an American.

"There must be some mistake. You must have got the wrong man," I said.

"Not if you are Alec Waugh."

Even so, I was unconvinced. I have a namesake who works in pictures, and whose bills, love letters, and income

tax returns have periodically been finding their way to me over the last twenty years. It was not impossible that John Archbold had confused us, but I did not see any reason on that account to decline what would probably prove an agreeable invitation.

We set off in a station wagon. I was not the only guest. Three other passengers had been collected off the *Lady Nelson*. They were making the round trip and were continuing north that night. My escort believed that I too was a round-trip passenger. He seemed surprised and possibly a little disconcerted when I told him that I was planning to stay a month.

Springfield is seven miles out of Roscau on the Imperial Road. From its veranda you can see a narrow triangle of horizon, framed between two cliffs. The mountains rise on either side of it, high and vertical, but not so close as to make you feel shut in. In the immediate foreground is the deep gorge of a river with banana plants climbing up its sides. The long living room behind has the solid, practical comfort of deep armchairs and substantial tables. My host was in the middle thirties, tall, fair-haired, clean-shaven; he was wearing a recently pressed Palm Beach suit and a canary yellow foulard tie. He fixed us drinks, and we sat on the veranda. The air had cooled rapidly as we swung up the abrupt, steep curves. I was glad that my socks were thick and that I had brought a sweater with me. I do not imagine that even in midsummer it would be really hot.

One of the party was asking John Archbold how he had come to settle here. He gave a typical beachcomber answer. He had come on a cruise, meaning to leave that evening, and suddenly, like that, had bought himself an estate. He was specializing now on oranges. He was concerned about finding a suitable label for his produce. At the moment he

could think of nothing more effective than Liquid Sunshine and that he recognized was not satisfactory.

Presently his wife, Lucy, joined us. She was tall, dark-haired and very lovely, in white linen trousers and a white silk shirt. She was clearly too young to be the mother of the studious ten-year-old girl who was reading in a corner of the veranda. I learned later that John had been a widower, and was now, remarried, on his honeymoon.

"Time for your supper, Anne," said Lucy.

Nothing could have been more "typically beachcomber" than this story of a man who had come to an island for five hours and stayed fifteen years; yet nothing could have been further from the beachcomber atmosphere than the domesticity of the scene and the keenness with which John Archbold was planning for his estate.

Slowly the night darkened round us and the air got colder.

"Time to be moving," said the man who had met me at the boat.

I rose with the others.

"No, no," said Archbold. "You're staying on for dinner if you can manage it."

It was the first chance I had had of explaining my predicament.

"Didn't you get my letter then?" he asked.

I shook my head. I was traveling "deck"; the letter explaining that an old friend of mine, Charlesworth Ross, the present commissioner of Montserrat, had cabled an introduction, had remained in the purser's office. I was to get the letter the next day.

"You'd better stay on. We've got a duck," said Lucy.

By the time I was back in Roseau, I had made two new friends.

That first evening at Springfield set the tone for my entire visit. As it was with John Archbold, so was it, I soon found, with the rest of the expatriate colony. Two other Americans live on the Imperial Road, one married to a compatriot, the other to an English girl. Both work their plantations seriously. There are also two American boys recently released from uniform who have started a lumber business. One of them has an American wife, the other while I was down there married the daughter of the manager of the Royal Bank. It was the most charmingly intimate wedding I have been to, with the planters bringing down from their estates great sprays of orchids and gardenias, and with half the native population peering through the windows of the church and lining up in the road outside to roar with laughter at the surprising headgear of the guests.

John Archbold is in a slightly different position from his compatriots in that he is a rich man with many responsibilities in the States, who can only devote three or four months a year to Dominica; throughout the entire war he was away on active duty with the U. S. Navy, but he has this in common with the others, that he is working his estate seriously, and by his presence on the island is contributing substantially both to its congeniality and prosperity.

Nor is the situation so very different in the case of an English expatriate like Elma Napier. A widow now, on the brink of sixty, she has two properties, one on the leeward coast which she has let, the other in the northeast corner of the island at Pointe Baptiste. Though she does not work either of her estates, she is a busy woman. There is nothing escapist about her life; not only has she written three or four books there, but she is active in local politics. She

serves on the legislative council, as an elected member, a thing that no other woman, white or black, has ever done. There are no proper roads in her district, and it takes her five days to cover it. She takes her obligations very seriously.

Eccentric things can happen and do happen in Dominica. Yet the life led there by those English and Americans who for reasons of choice have made their homes in Dominica is very remote from the somewhat sinister legend of irresponsible folk, cultivating new, strange vices while the rains wash away their roads. Yet even so I could not see at first what it was that had attracted to this island so many persons of charm and of distinction who could have lived most anywhere else in the world if they had wanted.

I spent a full month in Dominica and a month is ample time in which to examine the resources of an island twenty-seven miles long and thirteen broad. It is not a tourist's island. It has two hotels—the Paz and Cherry Lodge. They are clean and comfortable, but they are located in the very center of the town. They are hot and noisy. And the first requirements of a hotel in the tropics are a view and a feeling of fresh air. In addition there is Kingsland House, where I stayed myself, which is really not a hotel at all but the old home of Dr. Nichols, with whose work for the island every student of Dominica is familiar. His daughter now takes in a number of paying guests. It is at the top of the town, it is not particularly noisy, it has a charming garden and a clear view of the hills; it has no bar nor any license to sell wine and spirits, but guests are permitted to supply their own. I was extremely comfortable there myself and I had the good fortune to find myself in a group of highly congenial fellow guests.

Dominica needs a good hotel, but it would not pay to build one. There is little to attract the tourist. There is no bathing beach, for instance. The aquatic club is housed a mile out of town, in a small bungalow—one of a row—facing a six-yard stretch of pebbles that shelves into the sea. There is a certain amount of undertow so that the scramble up after a swim is awkward. Sun-bathing on pebbles is not comfortable, nor is there the slightest privacy. There are only two alternatives to the aquatic club: the rivers, where there is no space to swim; and Scot's Head, which is four miles away at the extreme south of the island, and where a long thin thirty-yard strip of sand runs out from Soufrière to a rocky promontory that once held a strategic fort.

There is no road leading to Scot's Head, and it is an hour and a quarter's run in a motor launch. Land breezes can be abrupt and strong, particularly on the journey home, and one is usually well soaked by the time that one is back in the harbor. A picnic at Scot's Head is a popular Sunday expedition. A fishing line may be towed behind the boat. The sand is white, and there is the shade of palm trees. From the summit of the rock among the ruins of the old fort you get a fine panoramic view of Martinique and the wide curve of the Bay of Soufrière. There is an agreeable village feeling about the place: fishing nets are hanging up to dry, fishing boats are tacking in the bay and in the rough waters of the Dominica channel. Sooner or later a boat will put in to shore, and a group of infants will eagerly gather around while a couple of fifteen-pound dolphins are disemboweled. As you wait your turn to drive a bargain with the fisherman it is by no means improbable that one or other of the villagers will offer you for a dollar twenty a bottle of French brandy that shows no signs of

having paid tribute to the British Customs. As you return to Roseau in the late afternoon, the sun will be shining on the church spire of Pointe Michele and the abandoned factories of Soufrière. It is a pleasant expedition, but with the exception of Trinidad no island in the Caribbean offers fewer facilities for bathing.

There are in fact few facilities for sport of any kind. There is little shooting; the fishing is poor; there is no golf course; the roads are so rough that if you take out a horse, the opportunities even of trotting will be few; any motor trip involves a return by the same route that you took out. Unless you play tennis, it is hard to get any exercise in Roseau.

There is no night life of any kind. The bar of the Paz closes at nine o'clock. I once came in to Roseau by launch shortly after eight at night to find the waterfront so dark that I felt sure the pilot was in error. I could not believe that any place so unlighted could be the capital of anything.

There is no leisured class in Roseau. Everyone is there for a specific reason. The adult white community of the island is a hundred strong. It has one club, the Dominica, a mixed club with a tennis court, a bar, a billiard table, and a bridge room. It is here that the social life of the island centers between five and eight, Wednesdays and Saturdays being the big club nights. There is no other meeting place apart from an ice cream parlor which is also a circulating library, a grocery store, and a sales counter for local handicraft. There is no restaurant. The returning of hospitality constitutes indeed quite a problem for a visitor. It is difficult for him to throw a party anywhere except in his own hotel. And if he does, an embarrassing situation

is likely to be caused in a building which contains only one small sitting room, unless he invites to it all his fellow residents.

The club in Dominica is very much more the center of the island's life than are similar situations in the other islands. There is less social life outside it. There are fewer cocktail parties and not only the life of Roseau but the life of the estates is centered there. Pointe Baptiste where Elma Napier lives is at least five hours away. There is first of all a four-hour trip to Portsmouth by a launch that stops at every valley where there are passengers and cargo to be landed and collected; then there is a three-quarters of an hour motor drive across the northern tip of the island; yet Elma Napier, who often has to come into Roseau for council meetings, is in touch with the life of Roseau in a way that in St. Lucia, the residents of Soufrière are not in touch with the life of Castries. Castries is an administrative center and its life is as much cut off from the life of the estates as was in World War II GHQ Middle East at Cairo from the formations in the desert. In Dominica, on the other hand, the planters along the Imperial Road come in for tennis two or three times a week and are invariably invited to any large parties that are held in town. The life of the estates is far more an integral part of Roseau's life than is in St. Lucia the life of the estates a part of Castries life. Life in Dominica is more compact, is more of a family affair, the threads are more interwoven, the fortunes of one are in a sense the fortunes of all. For residents of Roseau, life is reasonably full and varied, but the visitor to Roseau is likely to be bored unless he has some hobby or study to occupy his time or unless he undertakes expeditions.

On my first visit to Dominica I had crossed the southern tip of the island to Pointe Mulatre and had seen some-

thing of the interior. This time I crossed the center of the island by the mountain lake and traveled along the windward coast from La Plaine to Hatton Garden, the section along which no motor road has been even planned. The agricultural adviser, Louis De Verteuil, was making a tour of his experimental sections. John and Lucy Archbold, and John's daughter, Anne, were going too, with Mrs. Lewis, a Dominican friend of Lucy's. I made a sixth. We expected to be away six days. It was one of those trips on which nothing turns out as it is planned, but on that very account I got a clearer insight into the island's problem.

We started from the Botanical Gardens at nine o'clock; driving by truck to a point at which travel by road became impossible. We were met there by guides and horses. We were traveling light, but we had to carry a large proportion of our provisions. Crossing to the windward coast is an operation. F. A. Ober wrote in 1928: "There are no hotels on that coast, nor even boardinghouses, so one is compelled to share the hospitality of the planters (who are becoming scarce) or of common cultivators." Mr. Ober was prophetic. The planter caste is now extinct. And I doubt if there are any "common cultivators" who could provide possible accommodation. There are police posts along the coast, there are also two agricultural experimental stations. But one has to feed oneself. One guide, however, can carry several days' provisions on his head. Six guides and three horses were considered adequate for a six days' journey.

The journey to La Plaine from the point at which the trucks were forced to stop is, measured on a map, some eight and a half miles. We had traveled eighteen miles before we finally arrived. We started to walk at half past nine, we took half an hour's rest for lunch and three quarters of

an hour off for a swim in the Rosalie River when we reached the coast, but we did not arrive at La Plaine until after five. At the point where we left the trucks, we were at a height of a thousand feet. Before we began to descend, we had reached a height of two thousand five hundred feet, and we were traveling, it must be remembered, by the easiest track. The highest point, Diablotin, scales five thousand feet.

It is impossible however by looking at a map or studying facts and figures to appreciate the interior of Dominica. That is where the bureaucrats of the colonial office, sitting at their London desks, find themselves at a disadvantage when they blueprint Dominica's future. There is only one way to understand Dominica. You have to walk across it and along it. You have to realize just how long it takes to get from one place to another. Your feet need to be sore from walking on cobbles. Your calves need to ache from climbing slippery paths. You need to have been soaked by rain and chilled by falling temperatures as you climb. You have to see how sharply the cliffs rise above the paths, you need to note on this and the other mountain side the brown bare path of a landslide that would have cut away any road that had been attempted there. From a photograph you might be able to realize to what height the mountains rise. You might even recognize the vertical nature of those mountains, of how they stand up before you, like straight and solid walls. But what you would never realize from a photograph is the third dimensional nature of it all. To the right and left and straight ahead you will see what appears at first glance to be a solid range of mountains; you look more closely and you realize that it is not one range but two, not two but three. You cannot be quite certain whether it is not four or five. Range after

range with its leaf-domed summit merges into the background of successive ranges, with each shade of green merging into another and the passing of the clouds across the sun sending fresh waves of shadow into that seemingly solid background. You may guess how far away a place may be in terms of miles, but you cannot tell how far away it is in terms of time. You cannot tell how many valleys lie between you and it. Valley after valley, gorge on gorge. Arithmetic may show that an island twenty-seven miles long and thirteen broad has an area of three thousand miles, but no arithmetician could compute how big an area would be covered if a giant hand were slowly to press down and smooth out the whole thing flat.

Dominica has been called the loveliest of the West Indian islands. It depends on what you mean by lovely, or rather it depends on what kind of beauty most appeals to you. A taste for one type of beauty often precludes that for another. I would not say that Dominica was the loveliest island I have seen, but I cannot believe that in terms of grandeur and majesty there can be found anything in the world to rival Dominica's succession of forest-covered mountains. The forest is so thick that you cannot distinguish tree from tree. You cannot tell how tall they are nor how widely their branches spread. It is all a tangle of bamboo and ferns and vine, of palms and mahogany and mango, of cedar and bay and breadfruit trees. It is green, all green. At certain times of the year a tree in blossom will stab the mountainside with yellow or white or scarlet. But when I made this trip, there was not a tree in flower. There were no butterflies, there were no birds; though as we climbed, we heard the single shrill note of the Siffleur Montagne, the bird that seeks solitude and is rarely seen.

There were few signs of habitation along the way.

Scarcely a single village; barely a dozen bungalows. Occasionally high on a mountainside would be the brown scar of a clearing where the trees had been felled and the undergrowth burned. Every so often there would be a regular patch of cultivation, coconut or banana. Quite often we would pass small groups of peasants carrying on their heads the waterproof fiber baskets that the Caribs weave. Many of the peasants were of Carib stock. Their faces had a Mongolian cast, their black hair was straight, their lips were soft and full, their cheeks not so much brown as yellow. In the stream women were washing out their clothes. They greeted us as we passed, and their smiles were friendly.

A journey across the island is a succession of sharp climbs and sharp descents. There is no walking along the level. You are either sliding on a clayey surface or bruising your soles on pebbles. It is an open point as to whether sneakers or thick-soled boots are the less impractical. Hour after hour, that is the way it is, with the air getting cooler as you climb, with rain clouds intervening; but all the time, as you look back, you will continue to get sudden tremendous vistas of the Roseau valley with the houses of the waterfront framed between the mountains and the line of the horizon very faint beyond.

It is a journey which has in a sense no landmarks, or rather it would be more true to say that its landmarks are incidental. An expedition has to set itself some objective, some target or other to be aimed at; so one talks of walking out to Laudat or to the waterfalls, to the Boiling Lake or to the Fresh Water Lake. From the village of Laudat, which is about two thousand feet high and an hour or so's climb from the point where we left the trucks, there is a plateau raised above the valley, but the view is no better

than it had been a mile further back or than it was to be a mile further on. It is the same with the mountain lake. It is three quarters of an hour beyond Laudat. There is nothing remarkable about it, except that it happens to be there. It is simply a stretch of water. It makes a good full day's picnic in the same way that the waterfalls make a good morning or afternoon excursion, but it is not a spectacle. The waterfalls and the fresh water lake are alibis, excuses for seeing the scenery of Dominica. It is not what you see when you arrive, but what you see along the way that matters.

There is only one really dramatic moment as you cross the island and that is the first view of the Atlantic. You see it in a glimpse and for a few yards of roadway, from a distance of four miles and of two thousand feet, a brief shot, between the mountains, of the bay of Rosalie, a vivid triangle of white-edged blue, a line of surf such as you will not see anywhere along the leeward coast, a warning, as it were, of how different a world is awaiting you on the further side, as though the great architect of the universe had intended to flash upon the original Carib settlers from the leeward side this premonition of another way of living.

We arrived at La Plaine on a Monday evening; Louis was to devote the Tuesday to his section; we planned to move on northwards on the Wednesday, but, as I said, this was a trip on which nothing turned out as it was planned.

It was to end very nearly in cruel tragedy.

On the next day, the Tuesday, we went down the six of us to bathe. We had all of us, tired though we were, slept badly as one so often does in strange surroundings. We were in a lazy mood. It was good to lie out on sand instead of pebbles. I stretched myself on my face; Lucy ran past

me to the water; she was wearing a white and green two-piece bathing dress. She looked very slim and lovely.

"The sun seems to smooth away every trouble that one has ever had," I said.

"As the Greeks said about the sea," she answered.

They were so very nearly the last words we were to exchange. I lay forward on my face and let the sun beat onto my back and legs; rarely had the world seemed pleasanter. And then . . .

But it all happened so quickly that I am not sure even now what happened. I became conscious all of a sudden of a commotion somewhere. I raised my head and turned. Mrs. Lewis was shouting something. Louis, up to his waist in water, was signaling to the shore. He was shouting, but the wind was too strong for us to hear. Beyond him and to the right and some way ahead I could see John and Lucy. "They're in trouble," Mrs. Lewis said. I ran into the sea. Before the water had reached my knees I was aware simultaneously of a tremendous current that was pulling my feet from under me and of the power of the incoming waves that nearly knocked me backwards. I realized then that it was not to me that Louis had been beckoning but to a couple of grooms who had just brought the horses down to the water. One of them was running down the beach, the other was still fiddling with the bridles. "Both of you. Both of you," Louis was shouting. "Fetch a rope, a bridle rope," he said to me.

Before I had reached the shore the second groom had left the horses. Anne knelt forward on her knees, her forehead pressed upon the sand, was howling hard. I tried to comfort her. "It's all right," I said. "Don't worry."

By the time that I had brought the rope, the first of the grooms was on his way back with Lucy. Louis and I waited

in the shallows to take her from him. "Get back to the other one," Louis told the groom. Lucy was conscious but a dead weight. It was not easy even with the water below our knees in that current and against those breaking waves to carry her back to shore. By the time we had got her into the shade, John was already rescued. He was in far worse shape. He had swallowed a great deal of water, but he was breathing. It ought to be all right.

How long had it all lasted? Two minutes, five minutes, a quarter of an hour? Not more than three minutes in all, most likely. It had happened so quickly that I could not tell.

I sat by Anne in an attempt, by appearing myself unconcerned, to set her mind at ease while Louis worked on John and Mrs. Lewis on Lucy, kneading their backs, forcing the water out of their lungs. It was by the merest chance that those grooms had happened to be there at just that time, it was equally by the merest chance that men instead of boys should have been sent down there for the mere watering of the horses, as it was the merest chance that those grooms had been exceptionally strong swimmers.

Within a quarter of an hour Lucy, though in pain still, was coherent. John, however, was offering cause for some anxiety. Two years earlier he had been involved in a serious motor accident and his heart was weakened. It was necessary to protect him against shock. The beach was twenty minutes' walk from the rest house, the village of La Plaine was a further fifteen minutes' walk away. At the time of the accident the beach had been completely empty, but by now we had an audience of half a village. Every minute brought a new arrival, briskly swinging his cutlass, asking what he could do to help. Assistants were dispatching themselves bewilderingly by every path. "Get a jelly

nut," said Louis, and two bands of urchins scattered to collect green coconuts. There is no doctor on the windward coast but emissaries were on their way to every possible locality in which the dispenser from La Plaine might be at work. Another party went back to the house for a rug and brandy. They were very thorough. About everything West Indian, even about an accident as serious as this, there is a quality of comic opera. A Bedouin tribe could have encamped under the supply of blankets that they brought. Every bottle in the house was requisitioned, not only brandy, *creme de menthe*, and whisky, but brilliantine and *Aqua Velva*. They brought everything except the swizzle stick. Finally the parish priest came cantering up to perform last offices.

At length both John and Lucy were strong enough to be lifted upon stretchers. We were followed by a procession sixty strong. It was after one o'clock when we arrived to find to our relief as to our surprise that the wife of the dispenser, a trained nurse, was waiting in white linen and with two beds prepared. The cook, however, had not even started upon a lunch. At that point for the first and only time during the expedition Louis failed to control his patience.

"No food, and it's after one. What do you think army cooks do in a battle? They cook food for the men who fight."

Later in the day the cook broke out to Mrs. Lewis and myself in a fine explosion of self-vindictory rhetoric. "What I do? Death is coming to the house. In they come. Blankets they take. Bottles they take. What I do? Death is coming to the house. Who think of eating? Who want food? What I do?"

That night as I sat out on the veranda, watching the fireflies flickering above the crotons, I tried to reconstruct the scene, to remember the exact sequence of events. But I found myself, as I have on the two or three other occasions when I have been caught up in unexpected drama, unable to recall in detail what had happened. If you are sent to report a football match, the antennae of your perceptions are alert, but it is quite a different matter to be the witness of a car crash when you are walking down a London street thinking of the lunch party that you are on your way to, your thoughts concentrated somewhere else. There is the sound of a horn, the scream of brakes, a sudden cry, and there before your eyes is a machine mounted on the pavement and a pedestrian bleeding at your feet. But you have no idea, at least I haven't, what happened first, what happened next.

Had I had to give evidence in a court of law, as well I might, on what had happened on the beach that morning, I should not have been able to answer accurately such questions as: "What made you realize first that anything was wrong?" "When did you realize it was serious?" "How long did the second groom delay?" "What did Louis do when you went back to get the rope?" My answers, if they had been given honestly, would have been stumbling and uncertain. An incredulous look would have come into counsel's face. "Do you seriously ask the court to believe that every detail of such an episode was not photographed upon your memory?" Yet in point of fact, I could not remember what warned me first that anything was wrong, whether it was Anne's tears or Louis's waving or Mrs. Lewis's shouting. I only know that somehow or other I became conscious of commotion.

I wonder how often in a court of law a man's life or reputation has not been endangered by a witness who, having in all innocence produced an inaccurate sequence of events, has subsequently maintained his story through fear of appearing foolish in the box. During the later part of World War II, I worked in counter-espionage in Bagdad. I frequently had to interview enemy agents whom we had taken into custody. Before we had taken them in, I had anticipated that these interviews would clear up points which had long puzzled me; but when the time for examination came, I was surprised to find that very often the agents had forgotten what they had done on days so dramatic that I would have expected their least detail to have been imprinted on their memories until the day they died.

It was as I said a trip in which everything went wrong. But it taught me more about the windward coast than the trip which we had planned originally could possibly have done. In no other way could I have learned quite how completely cut off it is from the leeward coast. Gossip travels fast in Roseau, yet it was forty-eight hours before anyone rang us up. The dispensary did not stock the medicines that were required and a man had to be sent on foot to fetch them. That took thirty hours. It became soon apparent that Lucy could not continue the journey on foot or horse, and that the sooner she was got home the better. But neither to north nor south was there a motor road within ten hours of us. There was nowhere for a sea plane to land. There was no beach where a launch or schooner could put in. There was nothing to be done but wait.

I remained at La Plaine four nights, and when you are stationary, you have an easier chance of appreciating a

surrounding atmosphere than when you are on the move, when you are conscious of personal direction, of purpose, of an immediate objective. I learned during those extra days how completely stagnant was the life there, as much cut off from Roseau as during the war Roseau had been from the world. There were no newspapers. No one had a radio. A cricket match was in progress in Jamaica, a Test match between the West Indies and an English M.C.C. eleven, but there was no means of finding out the score, and anyone who knows how intense is the West Indian passion for cricket will recognize what that meant. At the head of the village street was a notice board containing a single typewritten sheet giving a summary of the world's news. But it was two weeks old.

La Plaine is a self-contained community consisting of a single wandering street with the Roman Catholic church the center of its village life. We called at the presbytery to arrange for a Mass in token of John's gratitude for the sympathy which the villagers had shown and the help which they had given. The parish priest was a youngish man, a member of the order of FMI, from La Vendee, which has for many years supplied the churches of Dominica and St. Lucia. He welcomed us with a glass of wine. He had only been out a year. After six weeks' instruction from his predecessor he had been left upon his own. He had spoken no English when he arrived, and though he was taking lessons from the local schoolmaster, his opportunities of speaking English were extremely few. He declined consequently to speak French with us, which made conversation difficult. The *patois* he had learned more rapidly, and it was in *patois* and in French that he addressed his congregation. It is not surprising under such conditions that the use of the French *patois* has been maintained, though it is nearly

a century and a half since the French owned the island.

We visited the church; though it had only been rebuilt eighty years ago, stone weathers fast in the tropics, and it had already an air of age. It had dignity and charm and color. It was easy to see why in a village of two-room shacks this building and its presbytery, now that the planter class and the influence of the big house has vanished, should serve as a symbol of authority and why its incumbent should be the most respected person in the neighborhood; easy to see why the church should be for the isolated villages along the coast the solitary link with western culture. Outside one of the village shops was a thing that I had never seen before, a wooden blackboard on which had been inscribed a four-line text from the New Testament.

Once the agricultural station had been part of a prosperous estate. At the foot of the valley stood the ruins of an old sugar factory. The machinery was rusted over. A tree was growing from the chimney stack, pushing out the brickwork. Portions of the stone channel of the aqueduct remained, and from a line of cabbage palms you could track the course that it had followed. A further cluster of palms marked the site of the old plantation house, no trace of which now remains. No one seemed to know when the plantation had been abandoned, whether or not it had survived the First World War, to have its limes hit by the withertip disease in the early twenties, and its sugar cane destroyed by the later hurricanes.

It was all as though it had never been. Today the peasant proprietor cultivates his own small garden, relying on local sales and goods that can be "headed" across the mountains. Vanilla is the easiest crop to handle, but the price of vanilla has recently slumped badly. A root called *toutlemoi* from the French *tous les mois*—meaning that it is available

every month—is on the whole the favorite product. There was a one-man mill by the stream that divided the station from the village. The owner trod a pedal which operated a wheel on which a grater had been fixed. He fed the roots through a hole in a wooden frame. A beige yellow-brown pulp fell into a trough below. His wife collected the pulp. She had a barrel over which a reddened cloth was spread, she poured a stream of water over the pulp, wringing it out, straining it through the cloth. When all the starch had been absorbed, the pulp was thrown away, and the starch left to settle in the barrel. It was washed again, then it was ready to be sold.

A one-man river mill looks very different from the elaborate arrowroot factories of St. Vincent, but the principle is the same.

I stayed on at La Plaine until the Friday. Then when it was finally decided to carry Lucy back to Roseau on a stretcher I arranged to push on by myself along the coast to a point where I could cut in across the interior to the Imperial Road. It was a three days' journey. One night I stopped at the police post at Castle Bruce, one night I spent at Marigot, back in civilization to the extent that I was in a village from which a surfaced road ran to a point from which I could take a launch to Roseau, to a point, that is to say, from which communication could be maintained with the outside world.

I was six hours on the road the first day, seven hours on the second. During the second morning I passed through the Carib reserve where survive now peacefully making their canoes and plaiting their waterproof baskets the thousand relicts of the once-warlike race that not only exterminated the original Indian settlers but resisted the British and French forces so effectively that the contesting

powers agreed for a time to treat Dominica as neutral territory.

In many ways the journey along the coast was a repetition of what I had seen already at La Plaine, a series of rivers running to the sea past ruined factories. Once Rosalie rum was famous; now at the river's foot there is just a chimney and a crumbling aqueduct and a slatternly cluster of untended cottages. It was the same at St. Sauveur. It was the same at Castle Bruce; with the cliffs between the valleys rising straight out of the sea, their vegetation crushed and beaten by Atlantic gales, and the shrubs that crown them combed back tightly against the rocks like the crinkled hair of a mulatto girl. I saw nothing that I had not seen already at La Plaine or that from my four days at La Plaine I might not have guessed that I would see; but Matthew Arnold said of Byron's poetry that to appreciate it you must judge it in the mass. The same thing is true of Dominica. You have to see it on foot and by the hour. Then, in terms of your own physical exhaustion, you can recognize how extensive has been the ruin there and how complete; how much moreover there was there to destroy.

Economically the windward coast lies prostrate; at the same time it is not possible to travel day by day and hour after hour along its lovely valleys without being attracted to the casual friendliness of the life that is lived there now. No one bothers anyone. No one is rich, but they all get along, cultivating their small gardens in the mountains, working their one-man mills. The smallest village has its cricket pitch. It all had a garden effect, such as is rarely seen in villages on the leeward coast. The villagers seemed quite house-proud, as though the further they had got away from the alien western conditions to which they had been transported, the closer had they returned to the clean-

liness and order of the bush. Native peoples are invariably clean in their own surroundings. And everyone that you pass along the road has a smile and a good morning.

The police sergeant at Castle Bruce showed me his monthly charge sheet. He had little crime, he said. In a large district he had had only one case of manslaughter in three years; there was little battery and assault; rape was unknown; robbery of houses rare; officially the worst and most general crime was praedial larceny, the robbing of crops and produce; but the chief entry in the ledger was the unusual offense of stupefying fish. The villagers rub bark over the streams, which has the effect of drugging the larger fish and making them easy prey. The shredded bark did not poison the fish; but what merely drugs a big fish kills off the smaller fish and those forms of water life on which the big fish live; if the process were not discouraged the rivers would soon be fishless.

I arrived at Castle Bruce in the early afternoon. I had brought with me for my supper a tin of corned beef which I was proposing to embellish with produce from the local store. The police sergeant looked doubtful when I told him this. It was a Friday and I could get no bread, he said. "What about fruit?" I asked. "Jelly nuts or pawpaw or bananas?" Again he shook his head. He was doubtful, very doubtful.

He sent his constable with me into the village. Its only store was run by a retired cricketer. Behind the shop was a freshly painted bungalow. Standing halfway up the hill, it was clearly the "Big House" of the community.

"You have heard of course of Mr. T. O. Murphy," said the constable. He spoke with awe.

Murphy was coal black in a way that only a Barbadian can be. Such teeth as he still possessed were very white. He

was powerful and short and stocky. His shop was adorned with relics of his career. A pair of batting gloves dangled above his door like scalps over the entrance to a red Indian's wigwam. There were pads in one corner of the veranda, and a bat leaned against the desk. It was an old bat, bound and pegged, but it told its story. There was a lovely spoon in the middle of its drive. That bat had hit many balls hard and far.

It was by now half past four. "What about a punch," I said. It was two punches later before I told him about my ungarnished supper. It is very rare for two cricketers not to like each other, and by then we were good friends. He shook his head, however, when I asked about buying jelly nuts. It was doubtful, very doubtful, he insisted. He turned towards the kitchen and shouted something out in *patois*. There was a scuffle of youthful feet. Anything that could be done would be done, I felt very sure.

He took me round his property. It was very small, less than an acre, but it was thickly planted with every variety of local produce. His chief source of income, apart from his shop, was a mill for manioc. In many ways it was like the *toutlemoi* mill at La Plaine. There was the same one-man pedal for a grated wheel against which the root was fed through a hole in a wooden frame, but it was a more elaborate construction. There was an amateurish but apparently effective balance by which the pulp was pressed under the weight of stones. There was also a furnace composed of a large flat *tayche*—originally a cauldron from a sugar factory—broken in half over a charcoal fire. Here the dried starch was spread and sifted. Murphy did not cultivate manioc himself but rented out the mill to his fellow villagers.

We went back to the bungalow for a final punch. As we

sat there sipping the white local rum, his emissaries one by one returned, with news of failure. Three hours earlier I would not have believed it possible that the chance visitor to a West Indian village however small would find it difficult to buy local produce. I suppose the explanation is that not one visitor would pass that way a week, that not one visitor a month would not provide himself with all the food he needed and that local economy was so accurately balanced that they only produced exactly what they needed for themselves. I could understand how their domestic economy must have been dislocated during World War II by the Free French from Martinique and Guadeloupe who insisted on a daily meat meal.

On the next day I went through the Carib section. It looked no different. On the surface the life led there is identical with that which exists on either side. At one time they had a language of their own—or rather they had two languages, for the men spoke one language and the women spoke another, but very few of the original words are now in use. At one time they built a slightly different kind of cabin with a second floor under the roof on which they slept, but now they have adopted the familiar style. They are Roman Catholics, and they play cricket.

They are very pacific nowadays. The corporal in charge of the police post at Salybia told me that he had very little trouble with them. They enjoy their rum as much as the next man does, but they keep their squabbles to themselves. When a Carib feels the need to let off steam, he calls a friend across and exchanges a couple of punches with him, without rancor or ill temper. That and no more than that, and he feels a great deal better.

They still make excellent canoes. I saw one that was being made. Long and narrow, scooped from a single

trunk, it was being dried over a fire with the inside filled with boulders to prevent the wood from shrinking. I also saw a local craftsman at work on one of the baskets that are in universal use throughout the island. They are made in two layers with large leaves arranged between to make them waterproof. The cover is decorated by the weaving of different colored fibers. Their only disadvantage for the northerner is the weakness of the handle, which is, of course, no disadvantage to the islander, who carries his luggage not by the handle but on his head. I bought one of the baskets, a 2'6" by 1'6" affair, for a dollar and twenty cents. I tried to talk to the man who had made it, but he spoke only *patois*. I was equally unsuccessful with the councilor to whom the corporal introduced me. A short dapper little man with a drooping black mustache, he looked like a Maupassant character out of the original Albin Michel edition. He spoke a little English and I could understand what he said to me. But his vocabulary was small, and I could not be sure he was understanding what I said. He was a courtly, gracious man, and he appeared to be in agreement with me. His replies, however, rarely bore much relation to my original inquiries.

On my return to Roseau I learned that an English motion picture company was planning to film in Dominica a novel about Christopher Columbus. By the time that these pages appear, the film will either have been screened or shelved, but already two galleons, exact replicas of the *Santa Maria* and the *Pinta*, have been constructed in Barbados at a cost of one hundred twenty thousand dollars and a team of experts has selected the most photogenic beach. One of them, Basil Keyes, is an old war-time friend with whom I had often swum in the Bain Militaire at Beirut. He told me that Dominica had been chosen as the

site of Columbus's first landing in the interests of historical accuracy, since it was the only island in which the Carib population still survives; a decision which shows that film executives grow to pattern, and that J. Arthur Rank's Ealing studios are related by ties closer than those of blood to Goldwyn's Hollywood. Since his arrival, Keyes had realized that complete historical accuracy was unlikely to be achieved, since the mid-Bahamas where Columbus landed were dead flat whereas Dominica's cliffs on the windward coast rise sheer, since the coconut palm had not then been introduced in the Caribbean, and since it was not by the warlike Caribs but the docile Arawak Indians that the Spaniards were made welcome. Keyes was accepting these facts with equanimity. He had made films before; he knew that historical accuracy is a question of what your audience knows. On one point only he insisted. On no account must a breadfruit tree appear. All the world had seen Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh. Everyone knew about the *Bounty's* business in Tahiti. He was also concerned as to whether the Catholic priests would allow their flock to appear in the attire in which Columbus had been received. "*Tellement nue*" had been Labat's startled description of a seventeenth century Carib. Keyes asked the opinion of the officer in charge of the police. "There is only one way to deal with Caribs," he was told. "Don't give them any rum until they've done their job."

I would give much to be present at the filming. From my brief experience of the Caribs I think that Keyes and his men will have a great deal of difficulty in getting the Caribs to understand what is required of them. The police officer's advice was probably very sound.

The Carib section is bounded on the north by a stream

so trivial that you would not recognize it as a boundary. The landscape is no different after you have passed. Valley succeeds valley. You climb and you descend. There is a cluster of cottages at each valley's foot and the creeper-covered chimney of an abandoned factory. There is a church and there is a cricket pitch, and women are washing out their clothes beside the stream. Villagers pass you on the road, each with his basket on his head. Mile after mile it is the same, and then suddenly at the foot of a sharp descent there is a river broader than the rest, across which is flung a very narrow one-plank-wide suspension bridge. You cross it and you are in another world; a broad and surfaced road stretches on either side of you.

To the right that road runs to the coast, turns north at Marigot, skirts Elma Napier's property at Pointe Baptiste, cutting across to Portsmouth. To the left it leads to the unfinished road.

A car had been ordered to meet me at Hatton Garden, the point where the track joins the road. I was on time, the car was not. I was tired and I was thirsty. On the opposite side of the road was a large plantation of grapefruit trees. My guide pointed it out to me. He also pointed to a group of girls who were coming down the road. "When they pass, I get fruit," I thought he said. I hoped I had misheard him. I had not, though. The moment the girls had passed he made for the plantation; he looked disappointed when I called him back, his face bearing an expression which seemed to say, "I thought you had more sense."

Presently the car arrived. I was spending the night in Marigot in a hotel rest house. I arrived in the late afternoon. A fleet of fishing boats had just come in, and the bay

was crowded. To my surprise everyone was talking English. By one of those caprices of history which make the study of the islands so perpetually fascinating, Marigot is as English as Barbados, with no French *patois* spoken, and a Methodist church upon the hill. Charlesworth Ross suggested as an explanation that a number of Antiguans who had originally come across to work at Portsmouth on a forestry project had later moved to Marigot to avoid malaria. Certainly there is little of the atmosphere of Dominica there.

Not that on that account it is without its charm. Like every village on the windward coast or for that matter like every village throughout the whole West Indies, it carries its own relics of departed glory. The walls still stand of the stone house that once stored sugar; thirty yards out from the waterfront projected the flight of steps which once supported the jetty which fed the ships, but Marigot even so has a prosperous air of bustle. It has a cinema and a local industry in the form of pottery which supplies the island with earthenware. Its store was well stocked with liquor; girls were selling cassava cakes and bread and grapefruit. There were men playing dominoes along the sidewalk.

The site of the abandoned airfield was a mile away. I walked across to it. There it stretched, a broad, long avenue cut through a coconut plantation. Beside it in broad, high piles were the stones with which it had been intended to pave the runway. It was only two years since work had been abandoned, but the tangle of grass and weeds was already ankle high. There was as little to show here as there had been thirteen years earlier in Coral Gables that many thousands of dollars had been wasted. On the near side of the airstrip were the ruins of a sugar factory. There were the

familiar chimneys, the rusting machinery, the crumbling aqueduct. There was an ironically symbolic contrast in this juxtaposition of an ancient and a modern failure.

I returned by road. I could have motored to Portsmouth and taken the launch to Roseau, but I had already made the trip by launch. I was curious, moreover, to go over the unfinished section of the Imperial Road. It was all cut out, I had been told. Much of it was already paved. There were only five miles to be completed.

Peter Fleming had been over the road with Louis De Verteuil a few weeks earlier. He had remarked to Louis that it was "a nice little walk," but then Peter Fleming is not a person to magnify discomfort. He looks at discomfort through the large lens of his glasses. He is a younger and a much fitter man than I am; what I would regard as downright dangerous would be merely inconvenient to him. He went, Louis told me, on a rainless day. He also followed for the first part of his journey not the line of the modern road, but the old Carib trail; and the Caribs are sensible people who did not cause themselves any more trouble than they needed. They knew that the longest way round can often be the quickest in the end. I look forward to reading what Peter Fleming has to say about the unfinished section of the Imperial Road, if he considers the details of so puny an expedition worth recording, but nothing he may say about "a nice little walk" will alter my own opinion of that road. It was worse than a duckboard track at Passchendaele, through a waste of shell holes.

It took me two and three-quarter hours to do five miles. It was raining all the time. I lost count of the rivers that I waded through and slithered over. Down the sides of the valleys that it is planned eventually to bridge the foot

path is so narrow, so overgrown, and with so deep a drop on the other side that you have to consider each step with the greatest caution or your foot will land on the green roof of a ravine. It is hard to distinguish between a solid root and a broken branch. The planned stretch of the road is either a greasy surface or a weed-covered accumulation of sharp stones. "The road is sliding," the guide kept saying, and he spoke the truth. Every so often the road had been blocked by landslides. We did not pass a single villager. In the solitude it loved the Sifleur Montagne emitted its sharp, shrill cry. There was one superb spectacle along the road, an avenue cut straight as a ruled pencil line, right through the forest. On either side of it the tall trees towered as it stretched in narrowing perspective towards the succession of mountain ranges that form Roseau's background. But I would not for the sake of it make that journey twice. I have never felt more personal emotion for an inanimate object than I did for John Archbold's station wagon when I saw it waiting for me at the point where the track became a road again.

As I drove through to Roseau, I thought back over the last three hours. I am not an engineer. I could not gauge the amount of skill and labor that would be required for the bridging of those five main ravines and all those minor valleys; I could not estimate the pressure of the mountain torrents that those bridges would have to bear. I could not measure the various problems of transport, equipment and accommodation that would be involved, nor the cost and difficulty of maintaining a road that would be subjected to an incessant cascade of rain and the consequent inevitable landslides. I am however familiar with the inherent laziness and inefficiency of West Indian labor. I know how

numerous are the demands now being made in other parts of the British empire on skilled labor and equipment, how diminished are the resources of English capital and how profitable are the uses to which, in other sections of the empire, capital and labor can be put. I had heard so much talk about that road. I had heard so many people say, "Of course it will all be all right once the road is finished." But if that road is completed in my lifetime I shall be astonished.

I arrived in Roseau soon after lunch. The day had cleared and the sun was shining now. The garden of Kingsland House looked very restful, very domestic after the barbaric scenery of the windward coast. Mangoes were ripening; the plants bordering the lawn were studded with blue blossoms; the tulip tree was still in flower, its bright red mellowing to orange; beyond the convent a poui tree whose presence before I left I had not suspected was now a brilliant splash of canary yellow against the deep green of the Morne; a hen was shepherding four infant ducks beneath the bay tree; an old woman in a sloppy, broad-brimmed straw hat was sweeping leaves up with a broom; the wind kept blowing off her hat, and once she lost her temper with it, beating it fiercely with her broom, abusing it with savage oaths. Soft vague clouds drifted across the sky.

I had another two weeks to spend in Dominica. They would be a pleasant two weeks, I was sure of that. There was the Anglo-American wedding of which I have already written. A number of parties had been arranged in honor of it. There were old friends to be seen again; acquaintanceships to ripen into friendships. There would be picnics and expeditions; I should work during the mornings

on the early chapters of this book, I should bathe in the afternoon, and gossip in the evenings on the club veranda. It would be a happy time, I knew. At the same time I knew that as far as this book was concerned my visit to Dominica was at an end. I could understand now why it was that Dominica should have exercised so powerful a fascination on so many people.

There is nothing to be done about Dominica. That is the crux of the whole issue. In every connection there is that constant vicious circle, that canceling out of contrasting factors. It will never be possible to restore to cultivation the estates on the windward coast unless there is a means of transporting the produce to the leeward coast. Roads have to be built or a coastal service has to be supplied, but the rains will destroy the roads and a coastal service cannot operate until the estates have been restored to their old prosperity.

Geologically Dominica presents a problem that no one has yet learned to solve. Its mountains are just that much too high for an island measuring twenty-seven miles by thirteen.

On my first visit I had been depressed by the defeatism that underlay the gaiety of carnival. I was not mistaken in recognizing that such an attitude existed, but I had not then seen far enough, I had not then seen how logical was such an attitude and how inevitable; nor that in the acceptance of it lay the island's charm.

John Archbold told me that Dominica had appealed to him because it was a place where he could do what he liked; a remark that would seem at first to confirm the Dominica legend of crazy people cultivating peculiar vices

in the rain. But John Archbold is not the kind of person who would want that kind of atmosphere, nor are the other Americans who have made their home there. They are all of them leading organized domestic lives, working hard on their estates. John Archbold was attracted to Dominica because it was a place where you are not fussed by busy-bodies, where you are not interfered with, where people generally assume that you mean well, because otherwise you would not be there.

Having realized that there is nothing to be done about its basic problem, Dominica has developed a rather large broadmindedness. It recognizes the rights of the individual, it recognizes the rights of the individual to be individual, to be eccentric if he chooses. There has existed, for example, for quite a while between two of the chief planters one of those ridiculous quarrels that break out inevitably every now and then in small communities. It has been going on for so long that no one knows any longer how it started or what it is all about. When one of them moved into a new house on an estate that was relatively adjacent to his enemy's and the question of installing a telephone arose, it was found that far the most economical way of installing a party line—and practically every country telephone in Dominica is on a party line—was by placing the two adversaries on the same extension. This clearly was impossible, and the postal authorities recognized it. With an admirable indifference to red tape and at a cost of several thousand extra feet of wire three or four connections were relinked so that only friends could be listening in to friends. That is just as much "typical Dominica" as digging holes to the center of the earth to reach one's wife's grave in the Antipodes.

That is one aspect of Dominica's particular and peculiar

appeal. There is however much more to it than that. There is an intrinsic quality of otherworldliness about "the fatal gift of beauty." What Matthew Arnold said of Oxford, in his famous "impossible loyalties" preface to *Essays in Criticism*, is apposite to Dominica. In the beauty of her valleys and her mountains, she stands both as a witness and a reproach, testifying in her perfection and defeat that many of the finest things in life are not for sale, that many of the finest things have no market value, that there are standards other than that of being in the black.

Stephen Haweis, to whom I have referred already, is spoken of in the other islands as a typical Dominica character, and in a sense, in the truest sense, but not in the way they mean, he is a part, very much a part of the Dominica legend.

A much traveled man, close now on seventy, an Englishman, educated at Westminster and Oxford, bearing an honored name, he came to Dominica in the nineteen twenties, to buy an estate, just as John Archbold did, in a moment of caprice. He was then at the height of his reputation as a painter. But a few years later, when the stock market crashed, his small West Indian estate was his only tangible possession.

That was his story as they had told it to me in St. Lucia.

"But he had his painting," I objected.

I had seen several of his pictures; one in particular had struck me, a cluster of coconut palms, sinuous, feminine and graceful, with each palm individualized, each palm seeming to have a distinct and separate existence of its own.

"The man who can paint like that doesn't need to be worried by a Wall Street slump," I said. "His capital is his hand and eye. He only has to go on painting."

"That's what he said. He'd come down to recuperate. As soon as the slump was over, he was going back to New York to have a show. He talked about it quite a lot, at first. But he never went."

"I suppose there was a girl involved."

"No, no. There was nothing like that about him. He's a widower. He's always lived alone."

"What does he live on?"

"Partly his estate, partly on his pictures. Sometimes he sends a few to New York. He usually sells a fair proportion of them. Sometimes he sells a picture to a tourist. He could sell all he wanted locally if he'd care to, but he puts a price on his pictures that are beyond the means of most. He's a pretty eccentric character, you know."

So eccentric that during the war, they told me, he had come into serious conflict with authority. He had written an article criticizing and attacking the Government's agricultural policy. Authority unwisely took offense and imposed a fine both on the printer and the author of the article. Haweis refused to pay the fine on the ground that freedom of speech was one of our war objectives. After weeks of argument and correspondence, a policeman presented himself outside Haweis' house with a pair of handcuffs.

"What happened then?" I asked.

"His friends bailed him out as soon as they heard of it. 'Typical Dominica.'"

Was it? Maybe it was. But it seemed to me that it was authority, not Haweis, that had been made to appear ridiculous. By any ultimate standards Haweis was in the right.

He was one of the first people that I met when I arrived in Dominica. I had expected that he would have become,

as old bachelors so often do, ill-kempt and scrubby. He hadn't, though. He was a short, neat figure, with thin white hair and an even grayish-brown complexion. Without indulging in any sartorial eccentricities he looked an artist. Just as the sitting room of his house looked like an artist's. It had the practical untidiness that an artist's studio should have. It looked a workshop.

He showed me some of his pictures. He had once specialized in fish, but now he was concentrating on vegetation. The chief thing that struck me about his paintings was the sense of movement in them. They were representational, though occasionally he adopted a cubist technique. There was one canvas of a man planting cane. The body did not join up with the legs, but there was movement there. In particular I admired a group of carrier girls, striding with baskets on their heads down a jungle path. They were fine Amazonian creatures with bright blouses and vivid turbans but they seemed colorless and dwarfed against the rich green background of the forest.

He smiled when I told him that.

"I only put them in there as a measuring rod. My father used to say about the Bible, 'It may not be the word of God, but the word of God is in it.' That picture may not be the forest, but the forest's in it. At least I hope it is."

He spoke unaffectedly about his work. "I care as much about my painting as I ever did. But I don't seem to care what other people think about it any longer. I'd just as soon not sell my pictures. I like to have them round me."

I had expected to find in him a certain sourness, a certain acidity; certainly an attitude of contentiousness. I didn't. Apart from the charm of his manner, which was very real, apart from an inherited and inherent air of ease and breeding, what struck me most about him was the

sense he gave of distance, of seeing the human scene in focus.

I asked him the inevitable question. What was it that had brought him here? He smiled at that.

"You know the old beachcomber story of a man seeing a pretty native girl on a veranda and letting his ship sail on without him. It was a mango tree that brought me here. Its native owner was about to cut it down; the only way to save it was to buy the ground it stood on."

"I'd like to see that tree," I said.

He pointed across the valley. There it stood in all its majesty, spreading its branches to the sunlight. It was not yet the mango season. I pictured it as it would be in a few weeks' time, heavy with swelling fruit.

"Why on earth did they want to cut it down?" I asked.

He laughed.

"It wasn't any use to them. I didn't know it at the time, but mangoes won't bear above fifteen hundred feet. We're over two thousand here. They'd have sold it as firewood. Charcoal fetches a good price. They were quite right, of course. I see that now." He paused, then smiled. "I felt rather cheated when I found it out. As a man might who gives up his career for a girl who turns out worthless. But that's nearly twenty years ago. I don't feel that way now. They were right, but so was I, though I didn't know it then. I'm glad I spared it. It's enough to be beautiful; there's no need to bear fruit as well."

All Dominica is in that comment.

Obeah

I SPOKE of the West Indians as an uprooted people. They have lost their country, their language and their faith. They have brought with them and retained, however, many of their superstitions. Much has been written in recent years, particularly since it has become possible for white men to visit Haiti, about Obeah men and voodoo rites, and there can be little doubt that in the last analysis most West Indians have more faith in their own witch-doctors than in the priests whom their education has approved for them. Until recently there was a clause in the Haitian Code forbidding the use of Zombies, the raising of dead men to work as laborers in the fields. Seabrook's *Magic Island* has dealt at length with this question.

The authority of the "Obeah men" is little questioned. Most residents in the West Indies have had personal experiences of "the spirits." A planter in Grenada wrote me the following account of one of his:

"Two of my laborers had not been at work for some time when I met one of them and asked him why. He said, 'Boss, the spirits troubling us too much. We never get any sleep at night.'

"I questioned him and he said for the past twenty days things had been thrown about in the house and that anyone who went near the house after dark got beaten with sticks and had stones thrown at them.

"I laughed at him and told him I would come myself to see what was going on.

"Two afternoons later I went to where he was living. He took me through a nutmeg grove and on up a grass covered hill to a small laborer's house built of mud and wattle. He told me this was the house where things first began to happen, and they had left the house and were living in their grandmother's house down below in the nutmeg grove, but that the spirits still attacked them.

"I sat and talked to the two young men, aged about twenty, a wife of one of them and two children till it began to get dusk, when I said we would go to the lower house.

"There was a worn path down the grass slope and no trees or bushes anywhere near. I sent the woman and children in front; then I came, and then the two young men. A few yards down the path the two men tried to run past me, shouting, 'Oh, God! They're getting us.'

"I thought they were trying to frighten the woman, and so I made them walk in front of me. After a few yards I felt gravel and dust being thrown at my head, and they started to cry out again. I pretended nothing had happened, although I had dust and fine earth over my neck and shoulders.

"We reached the lower house, and while it was light I examined it. There was a ladder of four steps to reach the door. On the left a half-partition, behind which was the bedroom. I looked under the bed and saw a basin with a corn cob in it, used for washing clothes. Sitting on the floor in the other room was the grandmother, leaning against the

partition holding a baby. Opposite her was a bench along the side of the house and under the bench some baskets full of nutmegs. Facing the door was a table with a lamp on it and a pickle bottle. I saw all the windows shut and barred, and stood in the doorway facing into the house. The occupants sat on the bench—two men, two women and the two children. I tried to persuade them that it was someone playing tricks on them and throwing stones, etc., on the roof, but they said, 'Wait, Boss. You will see things.'

"It was then dark. After some time there was a crash on the roof and a few minutes later a lump of earth *inside* the house came from the ceiling and fell on the floor at my feet. The people starting singing hymns, then suddenly the corn cob out of the basin in the next room flew over the partition and a few minutes later a shower of nutmegs out of the basket under the bench flew into the air and fell all round us. My hair felt like standing on end and when a few minutes later the bottle jumped off the table, hit the roof and fell at my feet, I thought it time to go; so, making some feeble remark about being late for dinner, I beat a retreat.

"These people next day had the Anglican parson to come and say prayers and when that had no effect they got the Roman Catholic priest to do ditto. The spirits took no notice and so they decided to call in the African Shango Dancers.

"They had to pay these people twenty dollars. They built a roof over a flat piece of ground about twenty feet square cut out of the hill above the top house. They started dancing—an old woman, a girl of about seventeen, and a man to beat the tomtom—at seven a.m. on Friday morning. On Saturday afternoon myself and a fellow planter went up to see it. They beat the same monotonous

beat on the tomtom and the old woman and girl made the same motions, dancing all the time. You could see they were self-hypnotized. The old woman fell on the ground from exhaustion and her limbs still continued to jerk in time to the drum. She then started to roll, and rolled over and over out of the shed down the hill and, to our amazement, when past the empty house, she rolled along the side of the house and then *rolled up the hill* into the shed again. It was a very steep hill—quite as steep as the hill from the Hospital in St. George's past the St. James's Hotel. It looked impossible and the whole thing was so inhuman and beastly that we left. I told the occupants to send away the young girl aged twelve, as I had read of poltergeists and felt sure she was the cause of the trouble. I don't know if they did so, but the manifestations stopped, as the Africans had said they would."

Such occurrences, my friend wrote me, are very frequent. In more than one respect the traditions and the faith of Africa made the middle passage from the Guinea Coast.

No one doubts the power of the evil eye. If a laborer who is unhappy can go into a decline, turning his face to the wall and dying in the course of a few days without any visible complaint, there is no reason why the same powers of concentration should not work harm upon an enemy.

I related in a book of mine called "*Most Women . . .*" a personal experience in this connection. The book has been out of print for many years, and it may not be inappropriate to reprint it here. It happened in Martinique. Before we moved into the country Eldred Curwen and I stayed in a small hotel in Fort de France; as they only charged us

forty francs a day and as that included, in addition to our food, as much red wine as we could manage, we did not expect a high standard of comfort. We did expect, though, something rather better in the way of service than the slatternly half-caste who clattered the plates like muskets, upset sardine oil on my trousers, and brought no potatoes till we had finished our entree. It was not even as though she had made up for her inefficiency, as do so many Negroes, by an amiable readiness to smile. She was sour and ill-favored. Without being old, she looked as though she had never been young. Her features were set in a sulky scowl. Her long, red print frock was soiled and shapeless. No pretty handkerchief was knotted in her hair. She was, we decided, just too much of a good thing.

"We'll change our table this evening," Eldred said.

We did not expect to meet with any difficulty. A boat was sailing for St. Thomas that afternoon, and the dining room when we came down to it for dinner was comparatively empty. The *maitre d'hôtel* became flustered, however, when we asked to be placed at another table.

"I have put you at Julia's table," he said.

"I know," we answered. "But we want to be moved from it. There are several tables vacant, aren't there?"

He nodded his head. Yes, certainly there were tables vacant. At the same time . . .

He was still hesitating when Julia shuffled across the room on her bare feet.

"That's your table, there," she said.

"We are arranging to change tables," Eldred told her.

The sullen look on her face darkened. "That's your table," she repeated, "there."

But by this time I had begun to grow impatient. "We can't wait here the whole evening," I said to the *maitre*

d'hotel. "Please find us another table. That one over there is empty, isn't it?"

I had begun to move across to it, when Julia pushed in front of me.

"Why?" she asked.

Her manner was so offensive that I spoke angrily. "Because I don't want to have all my trousers covered with sardine oil."

The sulky expression of her features deepened into a stare of fierce malevolence. Her eyes followed us as we crossed the room.

At the table next to ours was a French Creole who had come out on the same boat with us.

"That was a black look she gave us," I remarked.

He nodded his head. "It certainly was," he answered, pausing significantly, as though there were more that he would say. He shrugged casually, however. "Ah, well," he said. "It may mean nothing."

That night I could not sleep. I was weary with the exhaustion of a long sea voyage, of packing, of early rising, of the excitement of arriving at a new place, but I could not sleep: all night I tossed restlessly under the mosquito-net. I felt limp and lifeless as I came up from my shower bath to the wide veranda on which my morning coffee and fruit were awaiting me, to find that Eldred Curwen, usually a late riser, was already down. There were red rims under his eyes.

"How did you sleep?" I asked.

"Twice, for three consecutive minutes."

"That's more than I managed."

At the other end of the veranda the French Creole who had traveled out with us was dipping a crust of bread into his coffee. He laughed at our admission."

"I was wondering about that," he said. "If I were you, I should go back to Julia's table."

"What are we to take that to mean?" we asked.

"Only that black magic does exist."

"Are you trying to tell us that Julia's put a spell on us?"

"More or less."

"Do you expect us to believe that?"

He shrugged. "You can believe it or not believe it, as you choose, but do you fancy the people who run this hotel would keep a woman like that if they weren't afraid of her? Anyhow, wait and see how you sleep tonight. It may be that last night you were too excited."

Throughout that day I thought of nothing except sleep. As I strolled through the narrow, colored streets of Fort de France, as I sat on the balcony of the club sipping a rum punch, looking out over the green savannah to the white statue of Josephine, as I drove in the afternoon through green fields of cane to the palm groves of Carbet and La Fontaine, my eyelids ached and throbbed. I counted the moments till the sun should have sunk into the Caribbean.

It was only a few minutes after eight that I went to bed, feeling that not for another second could I keep awake, but once again I was to toss, hot and restless and exhausted, through the interminable hours of a tropic night, and once again, when at last dawn came, I found a fractious and red-eyed Eldred waiting me on the veranda.

"Really," he said, "this is too much of a good thing. I haven't had two minutes' sleep."

The Frenchman laughed knowingly over his coffee. "I should change your table in the dining room if I were you," he said.

We were less skeptical now than we had been on the previous evening.

"Has she been poisoning us?" we asked.

He shook his head. "She doesn't need poison—not material poison, anyhow. She's got beyond that. You wouldn't be surprised at the hotel keeping her on here if you knew her story." He paused; then, seeing that we were listening, went on.

It was as he told it us, in its beginnings, a typical West Indian story, the kind of thing that had happened a hundred times in Martinique, the story of a young French official posted to Martinique who had decorated his three years' exile with an island love affair. Julia was at the time sixteen. She was tall and straight and supple with a proud free carriage.

It was an idyll, so the Frenchman told us, too perfect to be compact of details. Past Schoelcher on the leeward coast there was a bungalow, and all day long as he worked at his office, as he played billiards in the club, as he lunched at his solitary table in the Pension Galliat, the young French official counted the minutes till five o'clock, till he should be free to drive out to that bungalow along the mounting road, picturing the moment when he would climb the veranda steps, and from a long rattan chair a slim, erect figure would leap to greet him. "What have you been doing all day?" she'd ask. "Counting the minutes till I could see you again," he'd answer. And they would laugh and run down to the beach to swim side by side through the sunset-reddened water; and afterwards, while he sipped slowly at his rum, she would sit curled beside him, his hand held against her cheek, while she sang to him in a low soft voice. For half an hour they would sit there, savoring after the heat of the long day the unutterable peace of

dusk. Then she would jump to her feet. "Suppertime," she would say, and scamper to the kitchen. After supper they would bring the gramophone out onto the veranda, and they would dance. As they danced they kissed.

Yes, it was an idyll. They never quarreled. She was never moody, never difficult, never jealous. At times he would surprise on her face a strange and brooding look. But he had only to touch her on the shoulder and she would turn round with a shiver and a start, blink quickly, and with a laugh become once again a merry and adorable companion.

They lived very much to themselves. Though everyone in Fort de France was well aware of the bungalow on the road past Schoelcher, its existence was tacitly ignored. Officially he was still living at the Pension Galliat, where he lunched and, for the sake of appearances and the occasions when his duties forced him to remain in town, he kept on a room. No French family would visit him in the country, and though he would have been himself received and welcomed anywhere he wished to go, he had no wish to go where he could not take her with him. Their only visitors were in consequence her cousins and an occasional man friend of his who would drop in on Saturday or Sunday for a drink on his way back to town. For the most part they were alone and were content to be.

"You're very wise," said to him the only man, a middle-aged doctor, who had lived all his life in Martinique, with whom he had cared to discuss the situation more than casually. "You're very wise. Make the best of it while you've got it. It won't come twice. And it couldn't last. It's lucky for you that you're going. It'll be a lovely memory. You're young enough to get over it, both of you."

The young man looked thoughtfully at the doctor.

"You're sure of that? It's true, is it, what they say about having one's place taken within a week of sailing?"

"Ninety-nine times in a hundred. It's a country of quick forgettings."

"But the hundredth time?"

"I shouldn't worry about that hundredth time, if I were you."

He could not help worrying, however. The time for his leave was drawing close: the leave during which his parents would insist almost certainly on his applying for a transfer. He did not know how he was to break the news to Julia. He did not know how she would take the news. Were the Martiniquaises really as casual-hearted as the doctor would have him think? It was only with a half of himself that he hoped they were. He knew how long it would take him to forget the little bungalow of Schoelcher. And he would have in France so many things to help him to forget: his career, his friends, his interest in the stir of life; whereas she, what medicine would she have whose life was absorbed so utterly in his? How was he to break the news to her?

The letter from Paris came, authorizing his leave. For the first time in three years he walked slowly up the long, steep flight of steps, and for the first time in three years the slim, erect figure did not leap from the long rattan chair to greet him.

For the first time the low voice did not ask, "What have you been doing with yourself all day?" Instead, the dark eyes met his not angrily, not suspiciously, not self-pityingly, but thoughtfully. "She knows," he thought. "She knows already." And, walking across to her, he put his hand upon her shoulder.

"Pretty one, I've heard from Paris. I'm going on leave in March," he said.

She nodded her head, slowly.

"How long will your leave last?"

"Nine months."

"And you will come back after it?"

He hesitated. It would have been easy to have promised her, as would the majority of men in his position. But to her he could not lie; not, at least, completely. He shrugged.

"Darling, how can I tell? If it were my own choice I would. You don't need telling that. I shall try to; try my hardest. But my parents—you know what parents are, they have ambition—they'll want me to apply for a transfer, to go somewhere where there's more scope. I don't know. I can't tell what'll happen. Perhaps"—again he hesitated—"perhaps it would be better for us to act as though I weren't going to return."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, there are certain arrangements to be made."

"Arrangements? What arrangements? I don't understand you."

"I can't leave you unprovided for."

She looked thoughtfully at him.

"Is it money that you're trying to talk to me about? Because if it is, you needn't. There'll be no need to worry about that. Let's go and bathe."

For the first time in three years they did not speak as they walked down the steps to the little beach, as they swam side by side together. And afterwards it was not at his feet but on the arm of his chair that she sat as he sipped his rum. And it was not his hand that she held against her cheek, but his hair that her fingers stroked as she sang to

him in the tongue that he had never learned. Tonight there was a new temper to her singing: it was less crooning, more barbaric.

"What are you singing?" he asked abruptly. "What are those things?"

"They are the songs of my people. They are very old," she said.

Next morning she was once again the laughing, light-hearted comrade that she had been to him through their three shared years. They danced and bathed and swam and kissed just as they always had; just as though each minute were not bringing them nearer to the hour when his steamer sailed. Sometimes he looked wonderingly at her: for all that they had shared, did he know her any better now than he had on that first evening so many moons ago? What was she thinking? What was she feeling? Had she, as so many maintained, the child's mind that could see no further than tomorrow, that could not picture to itself in advance the actuality of separation? Would she at the last moment break down into a fever of tears and passion? He did not know. But increasingly as the days passed he dreaded what that last night might hold.

When it came, however, it was very different from what he had expected. There was not the angry, hysterical outburst that he had dreaded. Instead, it was with an almost maternally protecting tenderness that she drew down his head upon her shoulder to repeat against his ear the low words he would never hear again: a tenderness more painful than any torrent of anger would have been.

"Tomorrow," he thought. "I don't know how I shall have the courage to see it through."

But when the morrow came it brought with it the merciful medicine of haste; there were bags to be packed, trunks

to be labeled, good-byes to be said. There was a farewell lunch party for him at the Hotel de France. It was not till he was seated on the balcony of the club over a last liqueur that he had time to realize what was happening. Then suddenly it flashed on him. Never again would he sit upon this balcony, looking out over the savannah and the calm white statue. Never again would he drive out at the day's end along the curving, mounting road. Never again would that slim, erect figure leap with dark, shining eyes out of a rattan chair to welcome him. Never again. Clear in front of him his future stretched—the future of the average competent young official. There would be a couple more colonial posts: North Africa, perhaps, or Indo-China. Then in the early thirties influence would secure him a post in Paris; and with Paris would begin the process of settling down: marriage, a prudent marriage, children and the safeguarding of the future. That was what lay ahead; cares, responsibilities, the end of the unknown. While at the back of him was youth and freedom and romance. What could life hold for him sweeter than that bungalow at Schoelcher, that love so true and careless, so uncomplicated by the maladies of vanity and profit? What had life to offer in compensation for his loss?

His heart was heavy. And suddenly as he sat there looking out there was a pain across his eyes, a pain so excruciating that he screamed out loud.

"What on earth's the matter?" someone asked.

"I don't know. I'm ill. I'm going to die, I think."

In an instant a little crowd had gathered round him.

"This is what often happens after a farewell lunch," laughed someone.

But a second glance was sufficient to prove that that was not his trouble. Wine could not have brought that livid

pallor to the cheeks, that drawn misery across the eyes.

"He's ill. Get a doctor quickly."

The middle-aged doctor who had lived all his life in Martinique looked thoughtfully for a moment at his young friend, lifted an eyelid, felt the heart, then scribbled some words on a piece of paper. "Take that round to the chemist. It may do some good."

In frightened silence, the group waited around the moaning figure.

"Will that medicine never come?" said someone.

It came, but it was powerless. The moaning did not cease.

"Take me home. I'm ill. I think I'm dying. Get me home. I can't stay here."

There was an exchange of glances.

"How can we? You're going to France. The steamer's sailing in an hour."

"Steamer. France. Good heavens, do you think I can go on a journey when I feel like this? Get me home, I tell you. Get me home."

There was another exchange of glances. The doctor nodded his head.

"Best get him home," he said.

All the way out along the curving, mounting road he groaned and shivered. They had to carry him up the long steep flight of steps. From a long rattan chair on the veranda an erect, slim figure rose to meet them. They began to explain to her, but she waved aside their explanation.

"Bring him in here," she said.

The bed was already open, the sheets turned back. At its head was a carafe of water. She stood quietly by while they laid him down, then seated herself at the bed's foot. The men who had brought him hovered indeterminately

n the doorway. Was there anything to be done? they asked. No, there was nothing for them to do, the doctor said. They could go back to town. Himself, he'd stay there.

The slim, erect figure at the foot said nothing. She was looking out over the sea. There was on her face a strange, apt, brooding look. From Fort de France, five miles off, came the steamer's siren. She rose out of her chair, walked over to the moaning figure, placed her hand softly on his forehead and with gentle, caressing fingers stroked his hair, murmuring to him words that to the doctor who had lived in Martinique all his life were strange. As she stroked the pallor went out of the lined cheeks, the moaning ceased, the taut misery vanished from behind the eyes. With a start and a blink of the eyes, he sat up in bed.

"What's the matter?" he said. "I've felt like death. What's happened?"

"Nothing. It's over. It's all right," she said.

His knees were weak as he tottered on to the veranda, to lean against the balcony, to see, steaming slowly on its way to Guadeloupe, the liner that should have taken him back to France. His knees were weak, but her hand was pressing on his shoulder. He felt her strength flow to him.

"It's all right, Doctor," he said. "You needn't worry."

It was with a white and frightened face, however, that five weeks later he broke into the doctor's consulting room.

"It's happened again," he said. "You've heard?"

"I've heard."

"It's inexplicable. I don't know what it is. It was just like that other time. On the morning that the boat was ailing I woke with that same blinding pain. I couldn't stir. I couldn't think. I was conscious of nothing except that pain. I just lay there moaning; right through the day;

right on till evening. And then suddenly just as that other time, it went. I walked out on to the balcony, and I might never have been ill at all. What's wrong with me? What's the matter? Do you know, Doctor, what it is?"

"I think I do."

"Then what is it? What's to be done about it?"

"If it's what I think it is, there's nothing that can be done about it. You will think I am romancing; but I have lived all my life among these people. They have secrets that are dark to us. When they want to commit suicide they do not shoot themselves or cut their throats. They lie upon their beds and die. They can will mischief or death upon their enemies. They have philters that will win them the love of the stubborn-hearted. It would be no hard task for them to make one who wishes to leave them incapable of movement."

"But that's ridiculous."

"That is what I knew you'd say. But consider this: there is nothing wrong with you. You can take my word for that. You are as fit as any man in Martinique. Yet each time that you have tried to leave the island, you have been so ill that you could not move; and each time, at the moment when the ship's last siren went, the illness passed."

"It's ridiculous! Ridiculous!"

But even though he spoke truculently, even to himself his outburst carried no conviction. . . .

Impatiently, he walked over to the window. In the street below the familiar, commonplace life of every day was pursuing its comfortable course. Motor cars were honking cheerfully, tourists with cameras and sunhelmets were boisterously calling each other's attention to the handcart announcing a cinema performance that was being pushed by a couple of minute black infants. Across the harbor a

four-master schooner was picturesquely drifting. The sheltered tables in front of the café on the savannah were filled with laughing, chattering groups. It was impossible to believe that contiguous with this merry, familiar, sunlit world existed the dark mysteries of Obeah. Impossible to believe, and yet, and yet . . .

With a frightened face, he spun round to face the doctor.

"You believe it, Doctor? Really and truly, that's what you believe?"

"Yes."

"Then what's going to happen to me? What'll be the end of it? Do you mean that it'll go on like this, that every time I try to leave the island I shall be ill? That I shall never be able to get away from here? Is that what you believe?"

The doctor nodded.

"But I can't. No, I can't," the young man persisted. "To stay here forever, to grow old here, to watch one's career going; never to see France again. To have one's juniors coming out here, and three years later going back, as one should have, to promotion. To lose interest; to lose faith in oneself; to lose one's self-respect. You can't really believe that that's what's got to happen to me?"

"Till the spell is broken, yes."

"And how is it to be broken?"

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. It was an expressive shrug. And, looking him in the eyes, the young man read his meaning. "I can't," he thought. "I can't." Though even as he thought it he knew that, were this calamity to be averted, there was no other course. Sorcery and the sorceress were one. Even sorcery could not outlive the snapping of the thin thread of life that bound it to its origin. It was his life or hers. As long as she lived, he was her

slave. As long as that—but for no longer. “I can’t,” he thought. “I can’t.” But there was no other course.

Slowly, with a tread that dragged, he climbed that evening the steep flight of steps to the veranda. And for the second time in their many months together the slim, erect figure did not leap to greet him. From the long rattan chair she lay and looked at him, not angrily, not suspiciously, but thoughtfully.

She beckoned him.

“Here, at my side, just gently, for a moment.”

On the ground beside her chair she dropped a cushion. As he knelt on it she drew down his head upon her breast.

“It’s so lovely here. All day long I’ve been lying, looking out, wishing you were here to share it with me. Have you ever seen anything lovelier?”

It was very lovely. The hour before sundown when the air after the long day’s heat is cool; when the lights grow gentle after the long day’s glare; when the shadows lie level along road and beach; when the blue of the sea grows softer, and the bright greens of the hill grow fresh as though dew were falling on them.

“Have you ever seen anything lovelier?” she said. “Do you think that anywhere in the world there is to be found anything lovelier than this? Do you not think that the man is foolish who would run away from it?”

Her voice was low and musical. But there was purpose behind her words. And he felt weak and irresolute; in the presence of something old and dark and very powerful. And he felt tired: grateful in his tiredness for the softness of her breasts, content to lie there, savoring the peace of evening, watching across the bay in front of them the little steamer paddling from St. Pierre to Fort de France.

“Let’s go and bathe,” she said.

Side by side, they swam through the sunset-reddened water, and afterwards, as he sat sipping at his rum, she crouched beside him, his hand held against her cheek, while she sang softly to him the love songs of her people. For half an hour she sang to him. Then she jumped to her feet. "Suppertime," she cried. It was his favorite dish that she had prepared for him: lobster spiced with coconut, served upon fried bread. Afterwards they brought the gramophone out upon the veranda. As they danced, they kissed.

That was the story as the Frenchman told it us.

"And that's fifteen years ago," he said; "and the man she did it for's been dead for five; they keep her on here because they just daren't not."

We listened in silence. Below us in the street motor cars were honking noisily. Out of a clear blue sky a heavy December sun was pouring its amber light across the green savannah on to the white statue. In the harbor were the funnels and the masts of liners. It was hard in such a moment at such a place to believe in the black magic of Africa.

And yet, and yet . . .

"I think," said Eldred, "we'll have our table changed tonight."

Julia's face showed no pleasure or satisfaction when we told her of our decision. Her scowl was as surly as ever. Her incompetence was as marked. She spilled the soup over the tablecloth, clattered the plates, brought us our fish cold, and butter when we had ceased to need it. We had a thoroughly uncomfortable meal.

But that night we slept.

Color

CLIFFORD BAX argued in his anthology, *Vintage Verse*, that there exists in the English temperament a perpetual civil war, a conflict between the Cavalier and Roundhead. As a corollary to that argument it could be maintained that there are two distinct and opposed types of the typical Englishman. There is the precise and formal type, the insular stickler for convention and for precedent, who distrusts foreigners and complains because he cannot on the Continent get porridge and tea for breakfast. There is the other type that only feels completely at his ease when he has seen the cliffs of Dover fade. It is the former type that controls and maintains the empire, but it is the latter type I fancy that acquired it. I do not think that Eldred Curwen and myself were any the less "typically English" because when we decided to visit the West Indies, we booked our passage by a French ship to a French island and on the journey out carefully avoided our compatriots.

On the tug that awaited us at Plymouth we eyed our fellow passengers suspiciously. There were not many of us. Two dozen at the most, of whom the half probably were second class. It was at Bordeaux that the majority of passengers joined the ship. They would be French for the

greater part, bound for Guadeloupe and Martinique; with a few Spaniards for Caracas and Cartagena and a smattering of English and American tourists making the round-trip of the Caribbean. Trinidad was the only British island that we should call at. And Trinidad is cosmopolitan. There are few races of the world of which you will not find traces in the wide straight streets of Port of Spain. The signs over the shops are Indian, Spanish, French. The history of many peoples has lingered there. You leave England behind you when a French liner sails through the mouth-way of the Garonne.

Bordeaux was thirty-six hours away, however, and at our side as the little tug puffed its way towards the anchored liner, an unmistakably English couple was discussing the tall, handsome, well dressed man who was lounging against the bulwark in the bows.

"I wonder," the woman was saying, "whether they'll put him at our table."

"If they do I'll jolly well complain to the *commissaire*," her husband answered. "Man's a Dago."

"Oh, John, that's what you say about everyone who's at all good looking."

Her husband smiled patronizingly.

"There's not much chance of making a mistake about this one. Trust me to spot a Negro when I see one. What would you say, Mr. Forrest?" he added, turning to a large, florid, genially middle-aged and prosperous looking person.

He was answered in an American accent.

"What would I say, Mr. Valence? If you were to ask me I'd say seventy-five per cent poor white and the rest tarred rubbish. If you were to ask him, of course, he'd swear to being Portuguese. They're all ashamed of what they are."

The woman made no reply. But her eyes lingered upon the lounging figure in the bows.

I could imagine what she was thinking. Tall, well built, well groomed, with dark waveless hair, an olive-tinted skin and open features, he was one of the most strikingly handsome men that I had ever seen. There was in the languid droop of his broad shoulders a rather breathless sense of conscious but assertive superiority. It was easy to guess how deep and instantaneous would be his appeal to one unaccustomed to the exotic. And the life of the woman who stood gazing at him had been, I fancied, little touched by glamor.

She was young; in the early twenties; and prettyish in an unfinished, unawakened kind of way. The range of her traveling had been small. The dressing case by her side was old, but little labeled. And I could not help wondering whether it had not been in the main a longing for color that had led her into marriage. For the man who had talked so domineeringly was not the type with whom a young girl would be likely to fall in love. In the middle forties, a little stout, a little bald, with a complexion that the tropics had drained of color, he had no apparent suppleness of mind to take the place of youth and looks. He was considerate, and no doubt affectionate, but a young and pleasantly attractive girl would scarcely have accepted him if marriage to him had not meant such definite advantages as the break with a home life that had irked her, or a visiting of the far places in which her dreams had dwelt. I could imagine the irritation she must be feeling at her husband's aggressive intolerance of everything that was not English; an intolerance that stood so fair a chance of ruining her trip for her. As the tug limped its way towards

the liner, her eyes kept turning closely but covertly towards the bows.

The first moments of any voyage are apt to be confused. Certainly the first of this one were. The luggage had been stacked in a pile on the lower deck and each of the passengers was under the impression that he had lost or was in danger of losing everything.

"There, you see, my most important suitcase lost," a fretful military-looking Englishman was complaining to a harassed spouse. "I knew that it would be. I know what foreigners are like. But you insisted on coming on a French ship. Now we're without any of our letters of introduction. We might just as well have stayed behind."

"Dear, isn't that your suitcase there?"

"Where?"

"Behind that coil of rope."

"Which one? That? Yes, so it is. And what a ridiculous place to put it. Who ever heard of putting a suitcase behind a coil of rope. Hi, steward, hi!"

The American who had been addressed as Mr. Forrest was characteristically exuberant and characteristically successful. Of the available stewards he promptly commandeered four.

"Now, that's mine and that and that and that. The sooner it's all in my cabin the sooner you'll all be tipped."

Mr. Valence on the other hand made a quick and punctilious examination of the scattered heap of trunks and suitcases, discovered and mentally registered the position of each article, then went in search of his cabin steward.

Alone of that querulous, impatient group the dark stranger took no interest in the proceedings. He tapped the first steward that he saw upon the shoulder.

"These are my baggage checks," he said, and his French was extremely pure. "There are five pieces. They are all labeled. Ronato's my name. Conrad Ronato."

He did not wait to see the collection of his luggage. With a smooth, flowing stride and with Mrs. Valence's eyes following him, he strolled towards the upper deck.

The first day of a long voyage is one usually of rest, unpacking and letter writing. It is not till the third or fourth day out that one begins to realize who is on the ship. Except for meals, and our morning and evening walk, we had scarcely left our cabin before the ship was berthed at Bordeaux, and we were leaning over the taffrail on the upper deck taking snapshots of the quay.

The Valences were practically the first to go on shore. Although the sea had been reasonably calm, Mrs. Valence looked frail and weak; so weak, indeed, that on the bottom rung she stumbled and but for her husband's presence at her side would have fallen.

At the foot of the gangway there was a group of cargo-men; lascars, half of them. And as she flung her arm round her husband's neck to support herself, one of them tossed a remark over his shoulder to his companions. From the whole group there went up a coarse, offensive laugh. She flushed. There could be no doubt that the laugh was at her expense. Her husband hesitated. The lascar who had made the remark was staring back at him with the insolence that the underdog assumes when he finds himself in a superior position. There was not a *gendarme*, not an official within sight. It was an awkward situation. Valence did not take long to make up his mind.

"Come on," he said, "the sooner we're out of this the better."

And stepping quickly on to the quay, he held out his hand to his wife to help her down. As he did so from the gangway at his back there came the sudden sound of a voice snapped furiously.

"You there, what in hell's name do you think you're doing?"

Without pausing to speak to Mrs. Valence, he strode past her on to the quay, up to the group of cargomen, and straight to the low-tongued Lascar. He made no attempt at violence; he did not clench his fists; he just stood there, his hands on his hips, looking the Lascar slowly up and down. Under that cold glance the Lascar, for all that he was as broad as Ronato and as tall, appeared to grow squat, short, insignificant. For a full half minute Ronato stood there.

"You scum, you filthy scum," he said at length, and his voice was cold, cruel and contemptuous. "Get away from here. Right away. Out of my sight. Go!"

The lascar did not even attempt a protest. Sheepishly he turned away. At the corner of the docks he paused, looking back to see if Ronato were still there.

"Get along: right away!" Ronato shouted. He did not move till the man was out of sight, then without a glance at the group of cargomen he swung round, and lifting his hat, bowed to Mrs. Valence. He did not smile, but his eyes, his bright dark eyes looked very straightly into hers, before he turned to walk on into the town.

Irresolute and in silence Valence and his wife stood at the bottom of the gangway.

Then lamely, querulously, but loudly so as to give an appearance of strength, Valence began an indirect defense of his behavior.

"That was needless," he said. "Far better to do nothing

in a case like that. Just as in the army an officer ought never to speak to a drunken soldier. It only means trouble. One usually comes off worst. And even if one doesn't, sooner or later the man's friends get even with you. We had a case of that two years ago in Port of Spain. Tell you about it some time. Never does to start a row. Always keep out of one, that's my motto. More dignified in the long run."

Leaning over the taffrail we heard every word. "He'd have done far better to have kept quiet," Eldred said.

I nodded. There had been no need for Valence to defend himself. He would have only made himself ridiculous, and his wife too, by exchanging backchat with a crowd of Negroes. She would not blame him in the least. Probably she had scarcely bothered to consider the part he had played in the incident. With thrilled breath she was remembering the imperious carriage of those broad shoulders, the snapped contemptuous order, the gleaming fire in those bold, bright eyes.

That, for four days, was the last we saw of them. For forty hours the boat remained anchored in Bordeaux. And there are few cities where forty hours can be spent more pleasantly. If Paris has better restaurants than the Chapon Fin and the Chapeau Rouge, I do not know them. I shall long remember the *bécasse flambé* of our last western dinner; the bottle of Cheval Blanc which the head waiter pontifically recommended and the soft rich brandy over which we sat long after the curtain had risen at the Opera, whose bouquet still lingered upon my palate as I lolled back in that pleasantly rococo hall, listening drowsily to Thaïs's wailingly reiterated *éternellement*; remembering the argument I had had with a surly Russian in Tahiti who refused to admit *pour toujours* as a translation of "forever." As he

had earlier in the evening insisted that there were professionals in English Rugger and that Dostoevski and Turgenev were not contemporaries, I assumed that he must be wrong also about *eternellement*. The party generally, however, preferred his rendering, so I handed over my hundred francs and waited patiently till I could convince him about football and Turgenev. Which I never did, since a few weeks later he went on a cruise round the Paumotus in a smallish schooner in the typhoon season.

And after that was Biscay; a savage and a bitter Biscay, with gramophone records and shoes and trunks slithering backward and forward across the cabin floor. It was two days before we could face the open with any confidence, and three before I found in the deck chair next to mine a limp, white-cheeked but forlornly appealing Mrs. Valence.

Her husband was on the other side of her. He had not been seasick, he informed me, but the skin of his face was tightened by the cold, giving him an unhealthy look. The conversation was desultory.

"I think," said Mrs. Valence finally, "that it would be nice if you asked Mr. Ronato to take a cocktail with us this evening."

"Mr. Ronato! Who's he?"

"The man who ordered away that lascar at Bordeaux."

Valence pursed his lips together.

"So that's his name, is it? He would call himself something Spanish. Ask him to take a cocktail with us? I'd much rather not. He's colored, you know. And it would be a bit awkward if he were going to Trinidad."

"He isn't. He's going to Puerto Colombia."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw it on his chair."

"You seem to have found out a good deal about him."

"What have I found out?"

"His name, and where he's going."

"One's naturally curious about someone who's been nice to one."

"I suppose so. Still—oh, well, I'll ask him if you like."

The consent was given grudgingly. But the invitation could not have been made more affably.

As Ronato came along the deck with a smooth easy stride, Valence rose from his chair and went across to him.

"I don't think one needs introductions on a boat?" he said. "I hope you'll be informal enough to take a cocktail with us before dinner?"

It was said charmingly. Whatever Valence might have thought personally about the man, he was not the type as long as relations remained cordial to be anything but a courteous host. And it was impossible to help remarking that Ronato's acceptance was made less graciously than the invitation had been. I wondered how it would turn out. Since I had been included in the invitation I looked forward to the evening with some eagerness.

It turned out well enough. Eldred and Forrest joined us and we discussed the kinds of thing that one does discuss at a first meeting on board a liner: the food, the accommodation, the other passengers, the countries that we were bound for. The talk flowed smoothly and superficially. No reference was made, however, to the incident upon the docks. In the end it was left to Mrs. Valence herself to make it, just as we were rising from the table.

"We've been sitting here all this time," she said, "and I've not even as much as said thank you to Mr. Ronato for his courtesy to me on the docks the other day."

Ronato shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, that," he said. "That was nothing. It needs a lesson now and again, that canaille."

"It's nice of you to put it that way, but I was very grateful."

Her husband flashed a quick, irritated look at her.

"Was that necessary?" he asked, as we walked down to dinner.

"I thought it was."

Valence shrugged his shoulders.

"Perhaps you're right. At any rate, it'll show you what kind of fellows these half-castes are. You heard the way he talked about the Negroes; that's the way colored people always do talk. Trying to make out that it's not what they are themselves."

She made no attempt to champion him. As likely as not her husband was right, she must have thought. He had lived in the tropics for nearly twenty years. But even so it must have been hard for her to believe that the first man to realize for her a young girl's dream of chivalry was no more than a quarter-caste pretending to be a Spaniard, covering his traces with abuse of the roots that he had sprung from.

On the following evening as we sat, this time as Eldred's guests, over cocktails, she deliberately arranged the conversation so that she should have a chance of seeing whether they were right.

We were talking of the West Indies: of their past, their problems, their uncertain future.

"They say," she remarked, "that half the trouble lies in the fact that the Negroes can't be made to work. Have you heard that, Mr. Ronato?"

"Of course I have. It's common knowledge. What can you expect with the way they're treated?"

"How are they being treated?"

"Far too well. There's only one way to treat these people: that's rough."

He spoke forcefully, contemptuously. And a frown flickered across her face. She could imagine the things that her husband and Mr. Forrest would be saying afterwards. She did not, however, abandon her attempt.

"You think you'd get better work out of them that way?" she asked.

Ronato smiled: a knowing, but not unpleasant smile.

"There's no other way," he said. "A hundred years ago my great-grandfather built himself a palace. One day he found a number of workmen loitering idly round a block of stone. 'What is the meaning of this?' he asked. The stone was too heavy, he was told. It could not be carried to the mountain top. 'Very well,' my great-grandfather said, 'line up there.' Then, turning to his bodyguard, he said: 'Shoot every fourth man. Perhaps,' he remarked afterwards to the survivors, 'you will feel stronger now.' Next morning the stone was in its place."

The story was told quietly, with an absence of stress that accentuated its drama.* As it reached its climax Forrest gave a start.

"Where was that palace?"

"At Sans Souci."

"Your great-grandfather was Henri Christophe, then?"

Ronato nodded his head.

"He had many sons. My grandfather was one of them."

* This story has been widely told and generally believed. There is, however, no historical support for it. John Vandercook maintains that it is out of keeping with Christophe's character. Waste was abhorrent to Christophe. He would not have wasted manpower.

The moment Ronato left us, Mrs. Valence turned eagerly to Forrest.

"Who was Henri Christophe? I've never heard of him."

"A great many people haven't," he replied. "Yet he's as romantic a figure as Nero and Caligula. Henri Christophe was Emperor of Haiti, the Black Republic. He swore to out-Europe Europe, and he built at the top of the mountain, no man knows how, a palace that's comparable with the Acropolis."

Mrs. Valence gasped. She knew now whence came that imperious bearing, that intolerant contempt. Challengingly she turned towards her husband.

"Well, anyhow there's one colored man who's not afraid of owning to what he is."

Valence made a clicking noise with his tongue against his teeth.

"Some people are clever enough to know that the best way of avoiding criticism is to invite it."

"Oh, John!" Then, after a pause, "That's quibbling. Anyhow, in a case like this, when he's got a grandfather like that. What do you think, Mr. Forrest?"

The American shook his head.

"I guess, Mrs. Valence, that I'm too much of a Southerner to be unbiased on a point of this kind. But, well, I'll put it this way. I've known quite a few damned fine colored people in my time. Maybe this fellow's one of them."

That night for the first time the sea was calm enough for dancing. As Mrs. Valence waltzed with her husband, one of those prosaic, uninspired dancers who give a woman the impression that she is dancing by herself, her eyes kept turning towards Ronato. Would he ask her for a dance, I wondered. And were he to, what action would her husband take?

It was a question that was very rapidly to be answered. At the beginning of the next foxtrot Ronato came across to her. He did not speak; he just bent forward, gracefully. Imploringly, as though she were asking mercy of him, she looked up at him; then, still with no word spoken, rose.

Mentally I raised my eyebrows. If this wasn't the start of something, I didn't know what was. Seated at her husband's side, I watched them.

Slowly, forcefully, with long even strides Ronato carried her into the rhythm of the dance. He was a straightforward dancer, with few intricacies of step, but the pulse of the music vibrated through every movement of his feet and shoulders, as through Western feet and shoulders it never can, so that his partner had the sensation of sinking into, or becoming a part of, that syncopation. It was a complete surrender of her personality; yet that surrender made her feel more complete than she had ever been before. Her knees felt weak when at the dance's end, with the support of that arm taken from her shoulder, she was led back to her chair beside her husband.

Valence rose affably to greet them. Without looking at his wife he addressed himself to her partner.

"Mr. Forrest was telling us some most interesting things about Haiti. Have you ever been there yourself?"

Ronato shook his head.

"In the old days I was too young. And now, with its white protectorate, I shouldn't want to. The old Haiti's finished. It's as well perhaps. From the beginning it was foredoomed. It could never have been anything but a mixture of red tragedy and comic opera. It was a brave showing, though."

For a few moments they discussed the strange fortunes of that strange country. Then the music for the next dance

began. Ronato rose, bowed, and moved away. Valence turned towards his wife.

"It's hot in here," he said. "Let's go for a walk outside."

It was bleak on deck. It was raining and there was a cold wind blowing. She shivered. "Darling, let's go back. It's miserable out here."

"If you like you can. I want exercise."

He spoke so abruptly that she started.

"John, what's the matter?"

"What do you imagine?"

"I can't imagine."

"Don't be ridiculous. Of course you can. How did you expect me to feel after seeing you dancing with that Dago?"

"Silly one!" Affectionately she put a conciliatory hand upon his elbow. He shook it off.

"I'm not being silly. Whites have to maintain their dignity in the tropics. What do you expect all these people to think, seeing you behave like that?"

"If they're so foolish as to let that worry them, does it much matter what they think?"

"Whether they're foolish or not, you can't afford to ignore the opinion of the people you live among."

She shrugged. That old argument. What people thought: the argument that right through her childhood and her youth had harassed her. She answered him in the same words, in the same tone, in the same temper that she had answered her schoolmistresses and parents.

"I'm sorry, John."

Her submission pacified him.

"Oh, well," he said, "it can't be helped. You can't be expected to realize all these things right away. I don't suppose it matters just that once."

That was the conversation that I pictured. But it may not, of course, have been anything like that.

On questions of actual fact no witness can be more unreliable than the novelist. In the same way that a mathematician will resolve at a glance into a simple equation a long and complicated row of figures; that a chess player will accept the inevitability of defeat when to the uninitiated the game would appear to be in an early and undeveloped stage; that a scholar will extract from a pile of unsorted documents the one sentence that he needs to defend a thesis; in that same way the novelist, since that is his job, his talent, will recognize quickly the essentials of a setting and the potentialities of a situation. But this very foreknowledge of what may happen, mingled with his capacity and his instinct to transport the shadowy and half-glimpsed-at figures of real life into the concrete world of his imagination and create there for them the situations by which they can be explained and realized, makes him an unsure witness as to what actually does take place.

I saw clearly enough the framework of the triangle; Valence, decent, honorable, well intentioned but prejudiced, unromantic, settled in his ideas; his wife, young, inexperienced, emotionally unaroused by marriage; drawn irresistibly by glamor; Ronato, unscrupulously conscious of his power, with the quarter-caste's need for self-assertion. I knew how that situation might develop. From the evidence of chance attitudes and glances; of an atmosphere impalpable but real I know how I believe it did develop. On my oath in a court of law I could only make one answer. But this is the story as I saw it.

By next night the wind had dropped. It was warm, with a baby moon waxing goldenly across the bows.

"It's heavenly," said Valence. "Let's go and sit on the boat deck."

"After we've danced," she said.

He looked at her suspiciously.

"Won't it be a little difficult for you if Ronato asks you to dance with him?"

"Why should it be?"

"It'll mean making an excuse."

"Perhaps I'll not be wanting to."

It was said laughingly. She had made up her mind that it was better to accept her husband's prejudices, however absurd they might appear. One had to be loyal to one's husband, and if one lived in a place it was more comfortable to conform, outwardly at any rate, to recognized opinion.

Her husband, however, not seeing the sideway glance that would have explained it, missed her mood.

"It doesn't matter whether you want to or whether you don't."

"Why not?"

"Because I forbid you to."

"And suppose I choose to—"

There was a dangerous look now in her eyes. If that was the way he was going to treat her . . .

They were passing close by the saloon. Through the open windows came the sound of music. Down the deck Ronato was strolling lazily. He came up to them with a smile and with a bow.

"Will you allow me the pleasure of this dance?" he asked.

Mrs. Valence looked challengingly at her husband. Had she seen there at that moment one sign of weakness, of affectionate pleading, an asking "for my sake don't do this thing," she would have shaken her head, contriving an ex-

cuse. But in her husband's face was nothing but that look of dominance, the look that ordered, "I forbid!" It hardened and it dared her. "Oh, very well," she thought. If that was his attitude let him try it. Let him try to stop her. Let him, with his hatred of being conspicuous, make a scene on deck before all these people. Let him learn, since he had sought the lesson, that it was dangerous to threaten an authority you could not exert.

Defiantly she turned towards Ronato.

"Thank you," she said. "I'll love to."

She danced as she had never danced before, vividly, in the pride of her self-vindication. There was a puzzled, questioning look in Ronato's eyes as the dance ended.

"I will take you to your husband," he said shortly.

But though they walked right round the deck and looked into the smoking room, they could not find him.

"Perhaps he's on the boat deck."

He was not, however.

Ronato smiled. "I am not sorry. I do not think your husband likes me."

She would have liked to tell him that her husband had forbidden her to dance with him. But loyalty prevented her.

"He's never said anything to me," she answered.

"He doesn't, though. I can tell that. He wouldn't. That type of man and mine have nothing in common with each other. While you—" He paused, looking very straightly at her through the moon-silvered dusk. "I cannot understand you, you English women. How you, thinking as you do, should tie yourself to a man like that, so calm, so self-assured, so measured, so incapable—how is it to be said—of revealing you to yourself. You, who were so made for loving."

He had drawn very close to her as he spoke. On the taffrail his little finger had hooked itself over hers. She tried to draw her hand away, but could not.

"You mustn't," she protested. "I'm married. You mustn't talk like that." Thinking, as she protested: "With one finger he is capable of holding my whole hand."

He laughed at the word marriage.

"Marriage," he said, "that's not a word that's ever meant very much to me or mine. My great-grandmother was sitting on the doorstep of her cabin mending a net when my great-grandfather drove through her village. She was fourteen and she had known no man. My great-grandfather paused before her cabin. 'The woman pleases me,' he said to his bodyguard, 'bring her after me.' My father was in a train on his way through Mexico when he saw my mother. She was tying back a rosebush in her garden. At the next station my father left his carriage and went back. Marriage has never meant much to the men of my family. We have taken the things we've wanted. At first sight we have known the things we wanted. As I knew when I set eyes on you."

His voice was strong and wooing, soft and purposeful. No one had ever spoken to her like that before. The young men whose fingers had brushed hers at dances, whose eyes had sought hers timidly in the hope of reading there encouragement of their enterprise; the slow, halting phrases with which her husband had asked her to marry him, how far removed they were from these glowing words.

"From the moment I met you, from the first time I saw you on that tug, from the first time I heard your voice, I knew we belonged to one another: that you were mine to come with me when I called, as you are going to when I call."

Glowing, intoxicating words: words that had never been

spoken to her: the words that she, whose heart loved color, had so longed to hear, had so despaired of hearing. Her blood beat hotly, her knees were weak with longing.

"No, no!" she cried. "No. No! Oh, my dear, how could I?"

For the remainder of the voyage she was two selves. There was the self who slept and bathed and dressed and ate and played deck games. The self who sat at table between her husband and Mr. Forrest, who bought tickets in the daily pool, who exchanged shipboard gossip with the other passengers, who was friendly and affectionate with her husband; more than ordinarily friendly and affectionate out of a feeling of compensating justice. There was that self; the ordinary, calm-blooded self; and there was the other: the strange, ecstatic, reckless self who between dances eagerly listened on the upper deck under the moon's cooling silver, timidly responsive, to the hot protestation of Ronato's passion.

"What's happening to me?" she thought. "What am I doing? Where am I bound?"

Only two months back she had been standing at the altar at her husband's side promising that for the rest of their lives, for better, for worse, she would obey him and honor him. And now, here she was planning heaven knew what madness, with this stranger.

"There are innumerable boats sailing from Martinique," he said. "We'll find one going somewhere, to Cayenne or Cuba or Guadeloupe. Does it matter where, as long as we're together? It'll be very easy. I'll find out as soon as we arrive. Before anyone knows what's happening we shall be away."

She shook her head. "No, no, I won't, I can't!"

But even as she protested, she had known she would. Here was something that had never come into her life before, that probably would never come again, that she could not afford to say goodbye to. No doubt she would be treating John disgracefully. He had been good to her. He had done nothing to deserve such treatment. And yet was she altogether to blame? she asked herself. Was it her fault that John had left so much of her untouched, open to another man's assault? If John had made her completely his, nothing of this could have happened. Had people a right to more than they could take and hold? Had they? She didn't know. She only knew that this was one of those impulses against which honor, loyalty, duty were cardboard armor.

And the days passed, bringing her closer to Martinique.

But all that, as I said, is purely guesswork. Things may not have gone at all that way. Whatever way they were going, however, it was very clear that the situation had begun to worry Forrest.

On the evening before we reached Martinique, Eldred and I found ourselves alone with him.

"I'm worried about that little woman," he said. "There may be nothing to it, of course. But it's far more likely that there is. I don't care about her husband much. He's a stiff kind of guy. But I like her and I don't want her to make a fool of herself; not with that kind of creature, anyhow. You'll say I'm prejudiced about color. You'll ask why a man should be any worse because his ancestors have lived for centuries under the sun. We were all much of a muchness once, you'll argue. But it's two thousand years since we were bewoaded Britons. And that's a long way back. It's not a hundred years since the Negro was a slave. Which is what you people in London just won't realize. You see

now and again an educated, cultured, charming Negro. You take him at your standard and you say that we Southerners are absurd to have this prejudice. But what you haven't seen is the Negro in his primitive state. You don't say to yourselves as we do: 'This may be all very fine, but fifty years back, boy, it wasn't quite so good!' We can't forget what a little way back it is."

He paused pensively. "I'd rather like that young woman to see what the Negro's like in his actual state."

We berthed early on the following morning.

From the taffrail of the upper deck Mrs. Valence looked down with wondering eyes on to the noise and color and animation of her first real tropic port. At Guadeloupe we had anchored in the bay. Pointe-à-Pitre was moreover a tattered be-cycloned wreck.

"Well, is it what you expected?" Forrest asked her.

She shook her head. No place is quite what one expects. She did not know exactly what it was that she had looked for. But this black, sun-baked stretch of ground with its motor cars, its sheds, its offices, its stacks of coal, its bright colors, its gesticulating crowd was at the same time more commonplace and more barbaric than she had expected.

"Most coast towns look much the same," said Forrest. "There's only one really distinctive thing about Fort de France; I wonder if you've noticed it. It's the women and not the men who do the coaling."

She had not noticed. She had done little more than glance at the soot-covered figures who were scurrying like ants with baskets on their heads from the ship to the pile of coal. But looking more closely she saw that they were, everyone of them, women.

"They carry those baskets," Forrest told her, "at five sous

a time, while their husbands stay in the districts and drink rum. It's the black man's idea of what a woman's position should be. It's interesting. But there'll be more interesting things to see before you go. It's Saturday, which is a bit of luck. You'll be able to see the Bal Lou-Lou. We'll go for a drive first. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

"I'd love it."

It was a restless journey. The car was ill-sprung. The road was bumpy. It was very hot. The back seat had not been constructed for the three of us who were jammed together in it, and the last characteristic of Forrest's company was reposefulness. As the car rattled, to the incessant honking of the chauffeur's horn, along the shaded road from the docks towards the town, past the savannah with its palm-guarded statue, through the hot, cobbled streets of Fort de France into the clear, green countryside, he did not for one moment cease to chatter.

"Now, look," he said, "look well. What's your first impression of this place? Gaiety. French gaiety and sunlight. But look closely, once you're out of the town, once you're past the cafés, look closely into those people's faces as you pass them. Do you see gaiety there? I don't. Surliness, arrogance, suspicion, but not gaiety. Look at that group there, on your right."

We looked. Ten or twelve island girls were coming towards us along the road. They carried baskets on their heads. Their chatter in the harsh native Creole gave the impression that they were quarreling. As the car passed they looked at us with sullen, inexpressive faces.

"If this had been Tahiti they'd have been laughing and singing," said Forrest. "They'd have waved their hands at us."

"I'd always thought of them as a happy people," said Mrs. Valence.

"In Africa they may be. But they're exiles here. Which is what you must remember of every Negro that we whites meet. They're exiles, the descendants of slaves, with the slave mentality; the mentality of liberated slaves. Look, here's one of their villages. Let's stop the car and stroll through it."

At first sight it was the tropical village of one's dreams. It stood on the edge of a path, with a clear stream running through it. Half-naked children were playing in front of their cabins, throwing tops; girls chattered to one another; a group of men were huddled about a game of chance that they played with a board and numbers. There were fishermen working on their nets. And yet instead of delighting, it depressed. You saw instead of a happy, carefree people living in touch with nature, stupid, unfriendly faces, dirty, airless cabins, grubby bodies, grubbier clothes, a prevailing atmosphere of squalor. Mrs. Valence shuddered.

"Let's go," she said.

Forrest looked curiously at her. He half opened his mouth to speak, but remained silent. For the rest of the journey he spoke little. For two hours we drove through some of the loveliest landscape in the world. Past palm trees and banana groves, through fields of waving sugar cane; now low by the sea's shore; now high looking over the blue plain of the Caribbean; now on a mid-country road with the rolling miles of greenery stretching to the smoking summit of Mount Pelé. It was lovely beyond the scope of speech. Yet it was easy to see how every succeeding mile deepened for Mrs. Valence the sensation of depression which the first native village had given her. Its squalor

marred the surrounding beauty. She could not forget that squalor; every nestling village, every group of natives along the road reminded her of it.

She looked limp and drained of life by the time we were back again in Fort de France.

"Well, that's one side of the picture," said Forrest. "You'll see the other tonight at the Bal Lou-Lou."

That dance, of which at every port of the seven seas you will hear sailors speak, is to be found only in Martinique.

It has a drama peculiarly its own. There is little to tell you, as you walk down the Rue Saint-Renard, that you are going to an exhibition that is without parallel in a white-run country. You pay your five francs and you find yourself in a large dance hall no different from many others. It is decorated with flags and paper streamers. There is a balcony round it, with tables and a couple of bars. It is filled with the kind of people that you would expect to find in an ordinary provincial dance hall in the French tropics; colored people, for the most part, with a fair sprinkling of white men; soldiers and *gendarmes* and young men in business. The music is such as you would expect in such a place; loud and syncopated; strident, with a heavily stressed rhythm. It all seems very ordinary.

"I can't see that there's anything very exceptional about this," said Mrs. Valence.

For half an hour she had sat on the balcony looking down at the revolving couples. It was the kind of thing that she had seen in England at her local *Palais de Danse*; only there it had been jollier. There had not been the continual surliness of these dusky faces.

"There's no real gaiety here," she said.

Forrest smiled.

"You wait, it's early yet. It'll be the real thing later on. At the moment it is Africa subjugated by France. Soon it'll be France subjugated by Africa."

We waited. The room got crowded. The atmosphere grew hot. Every table on the balcony was occupied. Waitresses were running backward and forward from the bars. There was a good deal of noise, but the characteristic of the dance remained unaltered.

"Is it never going to begin?" said Mrs. Valence. "I'm feeling tired."

"A minute or two," said Forrest. "It can't be much longer now."

At that moment there was the crash of a drum. From the next table came a murmur of *Danse du Pays*. There was a shuffling of chairs, an emptying of the crowded tables. Then on a loud crash the music started.

It is a dance that you will not see in public in any other country. The couples dance face to face. The girl clasps her hands behind her partner's neck. He clasps his about her waist. They dance with a swaying motion, quickly to begin with, but gradually the speed slackens: slackens till they are almost motionless. Clapsed close they sway together. With every moment the dance grows tenser.

The music does not grow louder or more fast, it becomes keener, more vibrant. The clarinet wails piercingly. It is half a moan, it is half a cry. The rhythm in every swaying body grows more purposeful; its symbolism more defined.

Half frightened, half fascinated, Mrs. Valence leaned over the balcony watching it. She gasped as with a wail the music ceased, and the dancers, limp and lax-eyed, fell away from one another.

"Well, what do you make of it?" said Forrest.

"Do they do it again?"

"Oh, yes, in a minute or two."

Her hands clenched tight upon the rail, her breath coming quickly and unevenly, glaring unseeingly in front of her, she waited in a stupor of anticipation till once again came the beating of the drums, till once more below her here were the tight-clasped figures; at moments swaying with hot, concentrated fever, tenser and more abandoned now, surer of one another; at others, motionless, save for the rhythmic tremor that from head to toe kept pace with the barbaric music. In a trance she watched it. Then suddenly, with a shiver, she turned away.

"I can't bear it," she said. "Take me out."

I could only guess at the thoughts that lay behind that stifled gasp. But it was not, I fancy, the symbolism of the dance, but the self-contained detachment of the dancers themselves that had revolted her; the detachment that made it possible for the dancers to change partners, as though it were the dance itself and not the person you danced it with, that counted. In that dance one can read written clear the denial of everything for which civilization stands.

"Take me back," she said. "I couldn't bear another minute of it!"

Of the psychology of what followed I can only guess.

Dazed, unspeaking, she drove back with us to the ship. On the deck, pacing irritably up and down, was Ronato. She blinked at him, as though she were seeing him for the first time. Stared at through distorting eyes, his face seemed to change before her, as though the nose were flattening, the mouth were broadening, the forehead lowering, the

color deepening; as though every drop of white blood were being drained out of it, as though nothing but the attributes of savagery were left. She raised her hand before her eyes. Everything she had seen that day: the women with the baskets of coal upon their heads, the sullen faces in the street, the squalid villages, the airless cabins; finally the loathsome dance: everything that she had seen during the last ten hours filled her with hatred and disgust for the face in front of her, for all that was symbolized and contained in it.

"Go away," she said. "Go away. I hate you. I never want to look at you again."

It was almost in fright that she ran down the deck towards her cabin.

Her husband had not gone to bed. Changed into pajamas, he was sitting on the window sofa reading a detective story. His face wore a fretful, harassed look.

"Ah, there you are at last. I've been worrying. Where have you been? You shouldn't go out like that—so late, I mean. It looks bad—people are bound to think—if they'd met me in the smoking room, for instance, without you—they'd have asked me where you were and if I hadn't known—that's why I came down here, so that people shouldn't ask. Really it's thoughtless. Thoughtless and inconsiderate of you."

She made no answer. She just stood staring at him. He was not one of those men whom pajamas suit. The stock size cotton-silk revealed the skinniness of his neck, the swelling of his paunch, the roundness of his shoulders. His thinning hair was ruffled where he had leaned back against the wainscoting. His chin was grubby with nineteen hours' growth of beard. Never had he seemed more feeble, more

ineffectual, less of a man. Her inflamed brain recalled the vividness, the force, the brutality of the dance that she had seen that evening. They had been men, anyhow.

With a shrug of the shoulders she turned away, conscious of the birth pangs in her of a contempt for her husband that could only end with death.

A Barbadian Snapshot

ON MY 1938 trip to the West Indies, I concentrated on the Windward group, on St. Lucia, Grenada, and St. Vincent. But both the ship by which I traveled out from England and the ship by which I went north to Boston afterwards stopped for a few hours at a number of other islands. I was careful not to waste those hours, and an exchange of cables through an intermediary secured for me, during my thirty hours' stay at Barbados, an invitation to lunch at the house of an American who had made his home there.

I was met on the wharf at Bridgetown by the kind of chauffeur—scrubby, unshaven, swarthy—to whom several weeks of West Indian travel had accustomed me. He might have been an octoroon, he might have been a quarter-caste, or he might have been simply sunburned. He wore sandals, blue cotton trousers, and a short-sleeved shirt. A rough-rimmed straw hat was pulled low over his eyes. His step was shuffling and his manner surly.

"You Mr. Wilding's guest?"

I nodded.

"His car's over there, by the Customs shed."

Long and low, a glittering stream of color in the morning

sunlight, a six-cylinder Chrysler presented a reassuringly opulent contrast to its driver.

My host's rich, I thought.

I corrected myself a quarter of an hour later as we swung into a long avenue lined with royal palms at whose far extremity was a white, two-storied, many-windowed house. He was more than rich: he was very rich.

From a rattan chair on a wide, flower-flanked veranda a tall figure rose to greet me. He was a man of about sixty. He had an open, smiling face. I made an addition to my estimate. He was more than very rich. He was nice as well. I settled myself comfortably beside him.

"I've so many things to ask you," I began.

So many things that we were halfway through our second punch before he had had time to say, "I wonder, by the way, if you ever came across the man who had this place before me? He was in your line. Weston."

"Max Weston?"

"You knew him, then?"

"I should say I did!"

I spoke decisively. Though I had not met him half a dozen times, the impression he had made upon my memory was ineffaceable. I have met no one who was more completely allergic to me.

I had met him fifteen years before. Little and dapper, in the early forties, he was slightly bald, with a high forehead and very prominent, staring pale blue eyes; but his distinctive feature was the texture of his skin. There are some men who at no matter what hour of the day you meet them look as though they had not shaved for thirty hours. You wonder when they actually do shave, since they are never either more nor less unshaven. Weston, on the other hand, always looked as though he had at that moment left the

barber's chair, where not only had he been shaved with exhaustive patience, but where the kind of varnish with which women anoint their fingernails had been smeared over his face from chin to cheekbone. The effect of that glazed and glistening surface was singularly repellent, yet at the same time singularly magnetic. He exuded electricity. I do not suppose that he ever made a friend; but he fascinated a great many people—young women in particular. He was purposeful in conversation. He had confidence. He was a lavish and effective host. He had, moreover, a background of achievement—of very definite achievement. At a time when professional English authorship was dominated by the American market, he was one of the chief New York lecture agents.

He specialized in English authors. During the 1920's he came over to London every autumn to interview novelists, agents, publishers. I should imagine that during those years he not only knew but had entertained everybody of any consequence in the literary racket. My most vivid memory of him is a lunch that he gave at the Savoy for a dozen or so of the younger writers. As a lunch it was one of the best that I have ever sat before. But none of us enjoyed it, really. When I hear Englishmen who have never been to America describe Americans as purse-proud, money-conscious, reducing all values to a dollar basis, my answer is, "Well, I have known *one* American like that."

At the end of the meal he leaned across the table.

"Now listen. You're promising. Every one of you," he said. "That's why you're here. You've got it in you to turn yourselves into the kind of successes I can use. But you're on the wrong track. You're all too literary, too clever-clever. I want life, real people, real problems, real backgrounds. That's what I can put across. The moment you start writ-

ing real books, I'm the man to sell you. Till you do, we're wasting each other's time. But when you do start—well, I reckon I don't need to introduce myself."

The knowledge that, as regards his powers, he spoke the truth was the most infuriating part of the whole performance. He might boast, but he could back his bluffs. I left that table praying that circumstance should never force me to owe him a debt of gratitude.

That was in 1925. And much had happened since, in the literary racket as elsewhere; New York was not in 1937 the happy hunting ground that it had been. Publishers on Murray Hill had ceased to advance on the delivery of each new manuscript a sum three times as great as its predecessor had earned in royalties. Editors in Philadelphia no longer commissioned serials that they "might find a use for some day." Even Hollywood had consulted balance sheets. But it was the lecture market that had taken the biggest toss. Through the 1920's any English novelist of standing could, by signing an American lecture contract, liquidate at the cost of a few weeks' casual conversation the accumulated liabilities of as many years. All that was over. Through the English author's own fault mainly. Those casual conversations had been just a bit too casual. Long before Wall Street broke, American audiences had grown as weary of listening to ninety minutes of trailing impromptu autobiographical reflections as they were of reading a few weeks later the articles in which on their return to England those same lecturers lampooned the absurdities of the American women's clubs that had financed them. By the end of the 1920's the lecturing English novelist was the most generally disliked commodity throughout the Union. And the climax was reached in the spring of 1931 when . . .

But perhaps that is a story that at this late day it is more charitable to forget. Let it suffice to state that it was a very long time since I have heard a brother novelist remark: "My arrears of income tax are ceasing to be a joke. I shall have to run across and pick up a few easy dollars."

So completely indeed was the lecture racket finished for the English novelist that I do not suppose that I had heard Weston mentioned five times in as many years.

That he of all people should have come here.

"Why on earth did he come?" I asked.

"To die."

"What!"

"He had a breakdown: you know the way he drank, last thing at night, first thing in the morning. One day he collapsed across a table. His doctors gave him a year to live."

I started; stared and started. A year to live! Is there anyone who has not imagined himself faced with such a fate; who has not wondered how in such a predicament he would himself behave? How had Max Weston faced it?

Not that I need have wondered. The story of that year, as Wilding told it me, was in every detail consistent with the conduct and previous spirit of his life, a mixture of pettiness, spite, swagger, vanity.

Spite came first. There was one person in his life that he had hated—his wife. I had never seen her. No one in England had. But everybody in New York knew that he owed his success to her: that her money had carried him through his early years. She was older than he was, considerably; she was neither clever nor smart nor handsome. But people liked her; had done things for Max because of her; had let him know it. He never forgave her that. He wanted to

believe that he had done it all himself. When the chance for revenge came he took it.

It was the summer of '29. He sold his contracts and goodwill—at a typical boom figure. He handed his wife a tenth. For fifteen years, he told her, she had made life a hell for him. He had only stayed with her because a scandal would have done him harm. Now he did not care. He was going to clear right out. She could send detectives after him if she liked, but the law worked slowly. By the time she had got the machinery of the law in motion, he would not be in the world to worry.

Spite had its innings first, then vanity. Most of us have one point on which our vanity is raw. Max could not forget his personal obscurity. However successful he might be, no one outside his immediate circle could ever hear of him. He was the middle-man pocketing his commission. His name meant nothing, never could mean anything across any column, in any paper. He had no news value. It was a fact that never ceased to rankle.

If most of us have one point on which our vanity is raw, most of us also have one person we are jealous of. Max had two. George Doran, the publisher, and Ray Long, the editor. Year after year through the 1920's they crossed to London to "contact" authors. They held the field. English authors owed more to those two men than to any twenty others in the racket. But it was not their success, but their prominence that Max resented. There was no bookshelf in the world on which the name Doran could not be read among its covers. The name Ray Long stood big on every copy of the two million copies of *Cosmopolitan* that month after month were scattered across the world. Everyone knew who Long and Doran were; nobody knew who

Weston was. All three, in their separate ways, were doing the same thing, introducing and establishing English authorship into and in America. All three successfully. But while two were "figures," one was not. When the doctors gave Weston his year to live, he saw his chance, not only of getting even with his wife, but of making himself a "figure."

He saw that chance, as one should have known he would, in terms of swagger. He had a year to live. He would make a legend of that year. Every dollar he could command would be spent on it. His plan had the simplicity that is said to be the half of genius. Fortnight after fortnight he staged in the house that now was Wilding's a succession of house parties. He knew practically everyone on Broadway. His guests' fares were paid. On such a basis, it was not difficult to make the pattern of those parties read like a Cholly Knickerbocker column. And on each party he invited one first-class journalist. As each fortnight passed, he read in his imagination the obituaries that would be starring the New York press within a year. No journalist, wearily looking for fresh copy, could fail to make Weston's last months in Dominica the subject of his column. Weston's eyes glittered as he looked ahead. His "year to live" would become a legend. He himself would become a legend. Whenever the literary background of the 1920's was discussed or written of, his name would be linked with Doran's and Long's.

I smiled to myself as I listened to Wilding's account of that year of parties. I looked forward to hearing other accounts from other residents. Max was a cad. But he was in character. I could not help admiring anyone who could carry through an act so thoroughly.

"And then—" I asked.

Wilding smiled, then shrugged.

"Doctors aren't always right."

He chuckled as he said that. I stared, not understanding for a moment. He laughed as the truth came to me.

"That's it. You've got it. He got well again. They thought he had an organic ailment. But he hadn't. It was simply drink. And drugs. When he was down here, in a decent climate, with no money left to buy a drink with, he was as fit as he'd ever been within a fortnight."

"But—" I paused, visualizing the incredibly impossible position in which Max had found himself. His money gone, his boats burned. The depression in full flood. No business, no chance of starting one. Hated by his wife's friends; discredited. A laughing stock because a doctor'd fooled him. He could not go back to New York. There was nothing he could do in London. There was no opening for him, anywhere.

"What on earth did he do?" I asked.

"The only thing he could do: stayed on here."

"Here?"

"He looks after the electric plant. I kept him on because you can't trust a native with machinery: too ticklish for them. He does his job quite well. As a matter of fact, you've seen him. He met you on the wharf this morning."

“Ambition” Bevan

I MIGHT NEVER have revisited St. Vincent, if I had not learned that a onetime school fellow of mine was there.

I had seen the island for a few hours on a wet mid-November morning when I was on my way through to Grenada. I had awaked to the sight through my cabin porthole of a semicircle of jagged mountains banked with cloud. At the base of the mountains ran the wharf—a long white colonnade, bisected by a wooden jetty. It was raining steadily. A dozen streams, pouring their silt into the harbor, sent a long tide of mud towards the ship. “Another wasted morning,” the purser grumbled.

Despondently he leaned against the taffrail. We had lost two days already at Barbados. West Indians only work when it is fine. Today they had not even bothered to send out lighters. Heaven knew how many more hours we would not have to waste before we docked finally at Georgetown. Inaction fretted the purser. Impatiently he tapped the toe of his white buckskin shoe against the deck, answering at random the passengers’ inquiries. St. Vincent? A poky little place. Pretty enough if you liked scenery, but nothing more. One of those small places that had gone to seed. One of the Empire’s liabilities. What did they raise here? Oh, most everything. Sugar, coconuts, bananas, with arrow-

root and sea-island cotton as their steady stand-bys. Was there anything to see on shore? Was there ever anything to see in the Caribbean except sunlight? And this was November: a month too soon for that.

His tone of denigration matched the scene. I never had seen anything less typical of a boat day in a tropic port. There was none of the traditional noise or bustle; no boys diving for pennies; no boatmen plying vociferously for hire; no bargaining vendors of fruit and cushions; only a couple of silent salesmen standing in a corner of the deck beside a small store of local mahogany, bead bags, Coronation stamps, and sharks-bone walking sticks. The two anchored schooners in the harbor, motionless beside their moorings, were appropriate interpretations of the atmosphere of general inanimation. It was not till I was actually on shore that I found the explanation. During a voyage one loses one's sense of the calendar. I had forgotten—everyone else on board had forgotten—that it was a Sunday morning.

The town of Kingstown was entirely deserted. Our ship, already two days late, had not been expected till the evening. Everyone who was not in church was sleeping late. The rain was falling with persistent heaviness. The chauffeurs of the four or five taxis that were drawn before the Customs solicited my patronage with no real expectation of success. The solitary guide, a tall, cadaverous African who presented himself with the introduction, "And what can Robert Taylor do for you?" soon wearied of following me through deserted streets, past shuttered windows.

Kingstown on that Sunday morning was the emptiest town that I have ever seen. I'd take St. Vincent as seen too, I thought, and then a week later in Grenada I learned of Bevan's being there.

Bevan. "Ambition" Bevan. It was I who had nicknamed him that before he had been at school a week.

He was my junior. But as the head scholar of his group, he had passed into a form that it had taken me a year to reach.

His existence had been announced to me by the head master's wife a week before the term began.

"I should be very grateful," she wrote, "if you would keep an eye on Bevan. As the only new boy to pass straight into the Upper School, he is bound to feel rather lost his first few days. He will be in the same dormitory as you, so it won't be difficult for you to give him hints."

The letter did not predispose me in Bevan's favor. Nor did Bevan's personal appearance. He was lankily overgrown, with a sallow complexion and a pimply chin. His collars were too high, his trousers were too short, his shoulders were spotted with a snow of scurf. He had filled his pockets with so many objects that the coat sagged sideways in heavy grooves. His hair fell forward from his crown, to be swept off the forehead with one sweep of a damp brush. He moved with a loose loping stride as though his ankles were in splints, with all the spring coming from his knees and hips. He wore powerful spectacles.

He introduced himself to me on the first evening after hall.

"I'm Bevan: the chap you are looking after."

I looked him over slowly.

"Are you?" I said. "Am I?"

He took my remark literally. He peered at me with a bright, hawk-like eagerness.

"Yes, that's right, and the first thing I want you to explain is the system by which set subjects are organized in relation to form promotion. As far as I can see—"

Convention decrees that a new boy does not ask questions. He may only answer them. But Bevan was beyond convention. There was no side of school life on which I was not cross-examined. At first I thought he was timidly anxious to avoid mistakes. Later I fancied that he was just inquisitive. It was a week before I understood. Then I gave him the nickname that lasted him right through his time at Sherborne. It was simply that he was ambitious; fantastically, overweeningly ambitious; that he was resolved to be a success and appreciated the value of discovering in advance the precise nature of the race that he was running.

Fantastic and overweening are the only adjectives that can describe ambition such as his.

A single example will suffice.

I had explained to him that when a boy had once reached the top form, the Upper Sixth, the form order did not alter and that prefectship was decided by a process of automatic seniority. He pondered that thoughtfully.

"In that case I must get ahead of anyone who's likely to be a rival before either of us reaches the Upper Sixth. I'm ahead of the boys of my own year. I ought to be able to stay ahead of them. But it might suit me to go up to Oxford at eighteen. I mean to be head of the school first. Now, I wonder if there's anyone from the year before that's dangerous. There's Parkes in Claremont's. He's in the Upper Fifth. I ought to try and catch up with him during the next year, and pass him while we're in the Lower Sixth together. Then I shall be head of the school in the autumn of 1916."

It was in September 1912 that he said that. I could not help laughing at such far-sightedness.

"My dear Bevan, if people are going to start looking that far ahead, I might as well be wondering whether I or some-

one else is going to be captain of the eleven in 1917."

"And so you should. As far as I can see Evans is your chief rival."

He was no less methodical in the planning of his private life. One Sunday afternoon I found him starting on a solitary walk.

"All by yourself?" I asked.

He nodded. "As usual," he replied.

It was a strange admission. Most boys are shy of being seen alone. It makes them look unpopular. I felt sorry for "Ambition."

"I should have thought you'd have got to know one or two of the new men by now."

"I haven't troubled."

"What!"

"One has to be very careful about making friends. Unless your friends belong to the world in which you propose to move, you have either to drop them when that world has become accessible, or remain in a world that you dislike."

"I don't follow that."

"No? I should have thought it obvious. There are larger and lesser ways of living. One should try and live in as large a world as possible."

He spoke in a petulant, slightly patronizing, slightly irritated voice. But I did not understand; not then. I just thought, "Poor old 'Ambition.' He's potty."

Which was how most of us felt about him. We thought him mad and left him to go his own way unmolested. He was not bullied. Bizarre though his appearance was, there was nothing of the buffoon about him. He was guarded by an unapproachable, dignified reserve. He went up the school at the rate that he had prophesied, a solitary figure, too absorbed by his ambition to share the communal inter-

ests and enthusiasms of house and school. Every term he was the winner of some prize. It was all turning out to plan. But he never seemed particularly happy. Occasionally the eager hawk-like look came into his eyes. But for the most part his face wore a driven, preoccupied expression. He was invariably alone. He availed himself of the Sixth Former's privilege of a study to himself—a privilege rarely taken. The only person in whose company he appeared with any regularity was a weedy, elegantly languid boy in another house, of no particular distinction in work or games, whose father was vaguely "county," his grandmother having been the third daughter of a peer. Myself, I saw very little of him after those first weeks. We seldom met in the classroom or on the field. His eyesight made him a poor footballer, and a worse cricketer, while my scholastic career followed a desultory course to the safe harborage of the history Sixth. We went up the school by parallel tracks, always just out of hailing distance of one another.

So little, indeed, did I see of him that I had to think twice before I could place the writer of a letter that I received in 1920, on the notepaper of the Oxford Union. The handwriting was ornate; so was the style.

"I am now," it informed me, "for my faults, follies and lack of courage, directing the embryo literary enthusiasm of putative poets. As their controller, adviser, mentor, I from time to time cajole, flatter and otherwise intimidate those from the larger world 'whose foreheads wear Apollo's wreathéd crown,' into succouring, guiding and generally supporting their uncertain ambits with counsel, exhortation, and such animadversions on the craft and aims of letters as may seem appropriate to their broader knowledge. May I therefore as a simple Osric, courtier in this cloistered city, humbly supplicate a Prince of Henrietta Street

to pass rapiers of dialectic with an ill-harnessed Laertes of the Alpha and Omega Society on the 29th of May?"

On a third reading I realized that this was an invitation to take part in the debate of a literary society of which Bevan was the secretary.

"Well!" I thought.

It was not so much the phraseology of the invitation as the fact that Bevan was responsible for it that surprised me. I had pictured his Oxford career in very different terms: long hours in the Bodleian and the lecture room; a permanently sported oak. It astonished me that "Ambition" Bevan should be wasting his time on literary societies.

If his letter had surprised me, his appearance did even more. He had been sixteen when I had seen him last. He had by then outgrown his untidy coltishness, but I did not expect to be met at the station by a willowy, elegant, almost distinguished figure in a pale blue jumper and a green tweed jacket, who peered at me through horn-rimmed spectacles and spoke in a high, slow and very mannered voice. Nor had I expected to find in Bevan's room a photograph of himself in uniform.

"I never thought they'd pass your eyesight," was my comment.

"Nor did I."

"Did they send you overseas?"

"I got gassed and wounded."

"Didn't all that upset your plans a little?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I hardly think so. I'm reading a short course, you see."

I raised my eyebrows.

"I had always pictured you as a Fellow of All Souls."

He laughed at that.

"Fellowships, that nursery nonsense!"

He spoke disparagingly of scholastic achievement. A man, he argued, must be educated, must be informed on men and manners; but the scholar lived in blinkers. What was the point of slaving to get a first in Greats only to become a Treasury clerk? One might get a long row of letters after one's name. But what did that amount to? It wasn't what a man did but what he was, that mattered. He spoke airily, condescendingly. It all sounded very odd, coming from "Ambition" Bevan.

I asked him if he saw any of the other men from Sherborne who were up at Oxford then. He shook his head.

"We've nothing in common. I never bothered to make friends with any of them there, why should I here? Sherborne: well, after all—" He hesitated. He did not want to say anything against his old school. But that pause struck a very precise note of tolerant disparagement. It was as though he were saying, "Sherborne's not Eton after all." "No, no," he said, "Barlow's the only one I see at all. I don't know if you remember him? In Claremont's."

I nodded. I remembered him. The tall languid figure in whose society alone Bevan had appeared to take much pleasure.

"I see quite a bit of him. He's, of course—well, how shall I put it?—" He pursed his lips in the attempt to find the correct phrase of qualified denigration, failed, shrugged. "He's a restful companion. It's pleasant week-ending with his people. But come now, don't let us waste our time talking about Barlow. There's so much I want to ask about your life in London. Tell me, what sort of people do you see?"

As he put the question that old hawk-like eagerness came into his face, as though once again he were asking me to map out for him the geography of the road he had to travel.

It was a question that I did not find it particularly simple to answer.

"As many different kinds of people as possible," I said. "A novelist ought to be like the centipede, with a foot in a hundred worlds."

My answer was clearly not of the kind he wanted.

"Yes, yes; of course, that is the great advantage of being a writer. You can go anywhere, yet you are received. Tell me now, which of the younger writers would you say counted most?"

"Hugh Walpole sells a lot."

"I didn't mean that."

"What did you mean?"

"I mean really *counts*. What writers, for instance, would be invited to a reception at Londonderry House?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"What!" He stared at me as though I were an unclassified disease. "You don't know?"

"Why should I?"

"Merely from the professional point of view, I should have thought that you would have been curious to know how your rivals and contemporaries were faring."

"I don't see that invitations to Londonderry House have anything to do with *that*."

"No? I should have imagined that even in these commercial days a writer would have valued the privilege of mixing with the big world."

He spoke in part pontifically, in his bored, superior Oxford manner; in part with the fretful impatience that

had come into his voice at Sherborne. Clearly, we were talking at cross-purposes.

I changed the subject.

"What are you going to do when you come down?" I asked.

"Take a flat in London and look round till I find something that really suits me."

He spoke with an airy confidence.

That evening I made inquiries about him at the College of which I was the guest. There was a titter when I told them how we had nicknamed him at school.

"The only ambitions he's shown any signs of here are social. He's the most crashing snob that ever walked," they told me. "He'll only know peers and honorables."

"Does he know many?"

"A good few. It's not difficult in a place like this. If that happens to be your racket."

With this information I felt better equipped to deal with Bevan.

When we met next morning, I directed our conversation into a social channel. He expanded, readily. A society columnist could not have been more full of gossip.

I nodded and smiled and interjected an occasional remark. It was easy now to realize what had happened. Bevan was a provincial; with a provincial's anxiety to mix in the great world, to make a name for himself, to be a figure. He had naturally regarded a school like Sherborne as a stepping-stone. He had avoided friendships that might prove a hindrance to him later, concentrating upon the classics, recognizing that to have been head of his school and a scholar of Balliol would make an effective start to a career at Oxford. But that start once made, he had found it pos-

sible without further calls upon his scholarship to mix with members of the world that dazzled him. I watched his face as he spoke of his acquaintance with the aristocracy. He was sunning himself in the light of his achievements. Although he had been content to read a short course instead of becoming a Fellow of All Souls, he clearly regarded himself as unqualified a success at Oxford as he had been at Sherborne.

He seemed, however, to be no happier here than he had been at school. His face still wore that driven look: the fear of being late for something.

I had proof of this before my visit ended.

We had gone into Blackwell's to buy a copy of the recent *Newdigate*. A tall, loose-limbed young man wearing an old Etonian tie came over to us. Bevan introduced me. As the introduction was one-sided, I did not learn his name. I did notice, however, how completely Bevan's manner changed. It was hard to say in what particular. But there was a general atmosphere of constraint, of self-consciousness; a tightening-up, a talking for effect.

"Who's that?" I asked when we were in the Broad again.

"That? Oh, that's Harry Marshall, Lord George Marshall, Patricxbourne's younger son. A delightful fellow."

A rich note of satisfaction like the purring of a well-stroked cat had come into his voice. Yes, I thought, you get an enormous kick out of reminding yourself that you know these people, but you're not in the least happy when you're with them.

What, I wondered, would happen to him when he came down. He had a private income of some five hundred pounds a year. A sum on which it is possible to make an adequate display at Oxford, but which does not see a social climber very far in London. I also knew how well-stocked

London was with young men from Oxford demanding employment worthy of themselves. It would be amusing to watch the outcome. Not that I supposed I should see much of him. I was not nearly grand enough.

Nor was I, neither should I, had not a friend of mine chosen to fall in love with him. Her name was Lucy Martin. And I can best describe her by saying that she was a typical 1917 club product. She was, that is to say, in the early twenties. She had become politically conscious during the last months of the war when Liberal opinion was turning towards the Labor Party in protest against a capitalist continuation of the war. She was pretty, in the hour's fashion: dark, bobbed hair, be-jumpered; with the smoke of innumerable cigarettes drifting across her eyes. Her slogan was "personal liberty." Politically, she was extremely narrow, angrily intolerant of every shade of opinion except her own; but in herself she was genuine, warm-blooded, open-hearted. She was in addition admirable company. She had a zest for life. She always enjoyed what she was doing.

I saw a good deal of her during the first half of the 1920's. She regarded me as a father-confessor. She had, however, the habit of labeling her acquaintances by their Christian names, so that I had no means of identifying the "Raymond" of a long, inconclusive, unsatisfactory saga. For weeks she had told me about him: how handsome he was, how brilliant, how misunderstood. "He could do anything, but anything; only in the way that society's constituted now there isn't anything for him to do."

I asked her what he did do.

"Nothing, as yet. He's waiting till he finds work that's worthy of him. He's bound to, soon, of course. But in the meantime you can't be surprised at his being rather bitter,

when he sees third-rate people succeeding everywhere."

He lived in a maisonette flat in Bloomsbury, spent his mornings in the Museum reading room, devoted his afternoons and evenings to a round of parties. "He thinks that the best way of finding the kind of work he wants. It's degrading for a man of his talents to be forced to adopt tactics of that kind. It'll be different when the Socialists are in power."

None of which particularly predisposed me in "Raymond's" favor.

"Is he very much in love with you?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"No. That's what makes it all so wretched. There's someone else."

"Who is she?"

"I've never met her. But he's got her photograph all over his rooms. She must be the explanation. There couldn't be any other. I think you ought to come and see him."

It was not till I was actually inside his rooms that I identified "Raymond" as my old friend, "Ambition" Bevan.

It was three years since our Oxford meeting. But Lucy's account of him, a glance round the room so typical of Bloomsbury with its long rows of bookshelves, its Van Gogh reproductions, its Wyndham Lewis etchings, its bright striped curtains, gas fire, many-cushioned divan; a quick survey of the physical change in Bevan, the loose collar and tie, the long hair, the sneering expression of the mouth, the pitch of voice, mannered and supercilious, told me what had happened in those three years.

He had come down from Oxford with his inherited income of five hundred pounds. He had no job. He was going to look round for one. And that is a bad platform for a young man in London. A young man earning four

hundred a year could have at that time more fun in London, which is a man's city, than anywhere in the world. A man with four thousand a year and no profession could have an exceedingly amusing time in London spending it. An independent income of four hundred pounds could be of incalculable value to a young man of industry and ambition, at the start of a career. But the one fatal combination was no job and a small unearned income. Particularly in the case of a young man from Oxford with ambitions, but undefined ambitions. Before Bevan had been long in London he had been forced to realize two things: that jobs were not easy to find, and that he himself with no job and very little money counted for nothing in the large vortex of London's interests. It was not surprising that he had grown bitter. He was, in fact, the most vindictively bitter person under thirty that I have ever known.

Lucy had said that it exasperated him to watch the success of third-rate people. It would be truer to say that he was obsessed with the desire to prove that all success was of a third-rate nature. Before I had been talking to him five minutes he had provided me with an example of his resolve to disparage and diminish the value of the most mild good fortune.

"By the way," he said, "I saw a story of yours in some magazine the other day. *The Royal*, I think it was, or perhaps *The Windsor*. I should imagine that that kind of thing brings in a lot of money."

"No. But it clothes and feeds me."

"Really? That's most interesting. Just what I'd have thought. Now, a writer like Ronald Firbank would probably not have made enough out of all his books put together to buy a cabinet of cigars."

"I'd doubt it."

"Strange, isn't it? And there's not the slightest doubt that in twenty years' time Firbank will be recognized as the one really important writer of this decade."

The only writers for whom he had a good word were those with three-figure circulations, who could not win a footing in such periodicals as paid contributors.

His interest in the social racket was as keen as ever. When we discussed any former acquaintance, one of his first questions invariably would be, "What kind of people does he go about with?"

We happened to mention a certain Soho restaurant. I told him that I liked it, and that I went there often.

"Would fashionable people go there?" he asked.

I told him that I did not imagine so.

"Who do go there?"

"It's hard to say. Quite a number of my friends."

"Writers and that kind?"

"More or less."

"Quite, quite. You are very wise to move among the people with whom you feel at ease."

It would be difficult to convey the exact note of patronizing contempt on which he made that comment. He placed side by side my capacity to sell stories to the illustrated magazines and my preference for the company of such people as frequented the Café X. By this standard I was judged and was dismissed.

It was extremely difficult to remain in his company for long and keep one's temper. It was absurd that a girl as nice as Lucy should have chosen to fall in love with anyone so sour.

"I can't imagine what you see in him," I said.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I don't know. He's so unhappy, he's such a mess. And

it's such a pity. It's all so unnecessary. Such a very little thing is needed to put it straight."

The remedy was not destined to come from her, however. Bevan let her come to his flat, curl up on a rug before his fire, smoke innumerable cigarettes, read his books, make Russian tea for him, argue about politics and the new world, but his attention was entirely focused on the girl whose photographs adorned his room. I knew her slightly. She was one of those bored, listless, amoral creatures of whom the novelists and playwrights of the period made fertile copy. Her hair was cut close about her scalp; she walked as though she had no backbone; her voice was so low-toned and drawled that you felt that she would never have the strength to carry a sentence to a full stop. She was well calculated to make supremely wretched any man who pursued her with "honorable" intentions.

"Why not chuck it?" I advised him. "You won't get anything that's worth having there. And there's a really nice girl who, for some incomprehensible reason, thinks a lot of you."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, I know. Poor little Lucy. But—oh, well, one can't get mixed up with somebody like that."

"What do you mean, 'somebody like that'? And what do you mean, 'mixed up'? Lucy isn't the kind of girl to start running you into a registry office."

"I know, I know, but—oh, well, we really haven't anything in common. And in a thing like that, it has to be the real thing or nothing."

The old Bevan: with his insistence on the two worlds; and his resolve to get the one ticket in a lottery. I saw as little of him as I could. He was too acid a companion. And it was from Lucy, not from him, that I learned of the dis-

aster which in terms of poetic justice was an appropriate corollary to his life in London.

Weary of doing nothing, acutely conscious of the low level at which his social stock was standing, he had sold out his War Loan and invested the resulting capital in a motor business with young Barlow as his partner. He had hoped to kill two birds with one stone. With Barlow's connections he would at the same time make money and move in the world from which his lack of prominence was rapidly excluding him.

To a certain extent and for a time his hopes looked likely to be fulfilled. Barlow did bring clients, the majority of whom were listed in Debrett. Unfortunately, they bought their cars on credit. When a slump came, they handed their cars back. Bevan was not the man to litigate against a peer. A day arrived when he was forced to recognize that his capital had vanished.

In a fine fever of indignation Lucy brought the news to me.

"He's been swindled, that's quite obvious. Those fine friends of his are making him their scapegoat. I've told him so, but he won't believe it. Instead of showing them up, he's saying how grateful he is to them for having got him a job abroad with the police. With the police, indeed! That's what they've done for him, a job with the police; a man like that. In a place like the West Indies too! That's where they're sending him; they would: they want him out of the way. It's disgraceful. What a waste of talent. But it's no good telling you. You never liked him. You were never fair to him. Oh, but it's tragic to think of a man like that being sent to a place like that. It just proves that the world wants turning inside out. The way things are run now, a man of real talent doesn't stand a chance."

Fumingly the flood of words poured on. "It's good luck for you," I thought. "You're well rid of him."

That was in '26.

During the next twelve years I was not to hear one item of news about him. I did not perhaps think of him so very often; one of the few times being when I read the announcement in the *Times* of Lucy's engagement to an exceedingly eligible young stockbroker. I made inquiries about him on my first 1928-29 West Indian trip but his name conveyed nothing in any of the islands that I visited. He had so completely passed out of my life, indeed, that on my second visit I had been in Grenada a week before it occurred to me to ask whether anyone had heard of him.

It was in the St. George's Club that I set that question, and I was conscious of a stir round me of inquisitive amusement.

"We had a Bevan here all right," they said.

"If it's the same one, I was at school with him."

"Would it be R. F. Bevan?"

"R. F.? Yes, it might." I hesitated. "It sounds absurd, but I'm not certain of his second initial. We always called him by his nickname."

"What was that?"

"'Ambition.' We called him 'Ambition' Bevan."

There was a laugh.

"There's not much ambition about him now," they said. "He's the manager of a second-grade plantation in St. Vincent, with a no-account colored wife and a couple of dreary daughters. 'Ambition' Bevan, indeed!" I stared at them, surprised. Bevan, the man who had thought himself too grand to have an affair with Lucy.

"How on earth did that come about?" I asked.

The answer was given with a guffaw of laughter.

"Through his father-in-law's strong right arm."

"Tell me the whole story, please."

It was the last story that I had expected to hear told of him, yet when I had heard it, I could see that it was in character.

Bevan had got a job in the police on the strength of his war record. It was not a particularly good job, but he was in uniform half the time, and the fact that he could wear war ribbons gave him a certain prestige. Anyhow it was an official job; and a somewhat stricter code of conduct is expected from a man holding that kind of post. He should not for instance get drunk in public and he should be discreet in his private life. Bevan was at that time anyhow a moderate drinker, but he made no effort to conceal his liaison with a colored girl working in the post office. He took her with him everywhere. He made a parade of the affair, flaunting it, not in self-glorification but in contempt for the rest of the community. It was another facet of his snobbery. It was a natural kind of thing for him to do. It made him, as he must have known it would, exceedingly unpopular. Even so it might have been all right if he had kept out of her father's way.

Her father was a man of sixty, of a type that you would have been unlikely to find at that time in any island except Grenada. He was quarter colored, but in Grenada the color bar does not exist. His great-grandfather had been the third son of a West country baronet who had run up debts, occasioned scandal and been sent to the colonies with a draft on a Barbados bank for a thousand pounds. Old Penton combined the patrician manner that he had inherited from his English ancestry with the aggressive truculence that is found in so many Negroes. He had made

money, he had lost money, he had made good his losses. He owned plantations in each of the Windward Islands. He had never married, but had sponsored a number of irregular establishments. He had stood no truck from anyone. Now at the end of his life, loud-voiced, a heavy drinker, generous and quarrelsome, he was a man that Grenada regarded on the whole as a credit to itself. He was a figure, a character; with his broad shoulders, his blue-veined cheeks, his mane of white hair, his loud voice, his great hearty laugh, his capacity to drink men half his age beneath the table.

Old Penton was too big for prudery. He would not have concerned himself about the reputation of even his favorite daughter, which in a sense Sally was. But he was not prepared to hear late in the evening, in the club, when he was quarrelsome with a succession of late nights and liverish mornings, a bored, supercilious voice remarking, "I suppose I mustn't keep poor little Sally waiting any longer. A little waiting's good for her. But not more than half an hour."

That was more than old Penton was prepared to stand. He rose from his chair. He lurched towards the bar. He was not taller than Bevan, but because of his breadth of shoulder he appeared to tower over him.

"You ought to think yourself lucky to have a girl like Sally waste her time on you."

He glowered at Bevan. He had never much liked the man. There was something namby-pamby about him; something supercilious and superior. He was in a bad temper, in need of a focus for his spleen.

"I suppose you think you are so damned important that you can keep her waiting. I suppose you consider yourself her superior?"

His eye ran Bevan up and down. He was in a mood with which every member of the St. George's Club was well familiar, which most of them had cause to dread. Bevan was nervous, but he was not a coward, he knew how to put a face on things. He replied in his most Oxonian manner.

"Well, really, after all—" He paused. It was said in the pitch of voice to which a monocle would have been appropriate. It increased Penton's irritation. That a weed like this should speak in that tone about *his* daughter.

"I suppose you think you're too grand to marry anyone like Sally."

There was an angry glint in his eye. He was in a mood that could only have been treated in one way. A hearty laugh, a slap upon the shoulder, an affectionately jocular, "Now, what is all this about? Let's have a drink and talk it over." But affectionate jocularly was not Bevan's line. The Oxford drawl came back into his voice.

"Well—"

"He never got further than that first "Well." Penton had banged his fist down on the table, his face an apoplectic scarlet.

"You middle-class rat. You think my daughter's not good enough for you. My daughter! Young man, I tell you this: either you'll have married my daughter within a month or as far as Grenada's concerned, you're broken. Get that straight."

There was a silence in the room as Penton lumbered back to his seat at the bridge table. Everyone knew that he meant what he had said. They only wondered whether he would remember it next morning.

He did.

When Bevan came into the club for his morning punch

Penton was already waiting there. He lifted himself slowly from his chair.

"Have you made your mind up, young man?"

"What am I to take that to mean?"

"You know! Are you going to marry my daughter or are you not? I give you three minutes to decide. I count for something here, and this I promise you: while I'm alive, and I don't mean to die just yet, you aren't going to feel safe walking across a single threshold in Grenada; for if I'm on the other side of it, I'll pitch you straight into the street. Your life, if you stay on, won't be worth living here; that's if you don't marry Sally. Even if you do, I can't much say that I want to see your face around. I've got a plantation in St. Vincent that needs a manager. That's where you can go. I'll give you a house. You can live, like others of your breed, on the generosity of your father-in-law. What about it?"

There were quite a number gathered round the bar. Half of them expected Bevan to cringe and to apologize; the rest thought he would try and bluff it through with an Oxonian superciliousness. None of them expected him to capitulate without a fight: to say, "I'll marry Sally. I'll be glad to," in a quiet voice, on a note almost of relief.

That they had not expected.

Yet that is what had happened. He had married her, resigned from the police, gone to work on his father-in-law's plantation. That was seven years ago. He had two children now.

"After all," I thought, "I'm going to St. Vincent."

The sun was shining five mornings later when my ship drew into Kingstown Harbor. Everything looked very

bright and gay. The waterfront was crowded. Rowboats were plying busily between the ship and jetty. It looked a very different place. It all looked very friendly, very welcoming, as indeed it is. I wondered though if it had been those things for Bevan.

During the five days since I had learned that he was living there, I had been reading, I had made inquiries about St. Vincent. It had had, I found, a curious history. When the other islands were being occupied by French, Spanish, English and Dutch settlers, here the Caribs had put up so fierce an opposition to their invaders that the island had known no peaceful colonization, till the majority of the Caribs were deported at the start of the nineteenth century. In consequence St. Vincent had never fully shared in the eighteenth century boom of the sugar islands. It had not the same long-established planter aristocracy. There was not so much to be destroyed during the French Revolution, and when the slaves were emancipated, there was not the same inducement to the settlers to brood over "departed glory." They were the product of a later movement. They did not feel the same compunction to abandon their estates to overseers when the former feudal conditions were resolved. In consequence, I was told, more purely white families were to be found in St. Vincent than in many of the other islands.

All of which added to the interest that St. Vincent held for me as a traveler, but it did not make it sound the easiest background for the kind of life that Bevan had been called upon to lead.

I had brought with me a letter of introduction to the manager of the Bank of Scotland. I had not been able to persuade Eldred Curwen to accompany me on the trip,

but I had joined forces on the way out with a lively young man named Blunden who in many ways resembled Curwen and who was doing the grand tour before settling down in his father's business.

We went straight from our hotel to the bank with my letter of introduction. The manager shrugged when I mentioned Bevan.

"Poor devil, he's done for himself out here. Done for himself in every way, in fact. Ordinarily if a man makes a mess of his own life, he does get a kind of second innings in his children's. He can say to himself, 'Well, anyhow, I can protect my kids from making the mistakes I made.' If they do come through all right, he can feel that his own life's not wasted. But in Bevan's case—what is there for those girls of his—with that tag on them? Their only real chance of being happy is to accept and make the best of their own colored world. What chance do they stand of marrying anyone worth while?"

"How do I set about seeing him?" I asked.

"Easiest thing. He'll be at the club this morning. He always comes in for boat days."

I wondered what manner of man I should encounter. It was over twelve years since I had seen him. I remembered the savage, spiteful, snarling creature whose acquaintance I had willingly let drop. If he had been bitter then, heaven knew what these last seven years here would have made of him.

They had made, I was to find, the very last thing I had expected. In appearance he was very different. But that I had expected. Indeed, unless I had known that I was to meet him, I doubt if I should have recognized him. He was in typical planter clothes: khaki shorts, bare knees,

brown and scratched; a cotton shirt, open at the neck. He was still thin, though considerably stouter than when I had last seen him, with the straining of his linen coat suggesting that he was likely to grow a paunch. His face, that had been pimply and pallid, was sallow, yet at the same time tanned, with blue veins breaking out under the eyes and round the nostrils. Physically he was very changed. But it was not his physical change that struck me. It was mentally that he was different. He was at ease, affable, open-handed. The moment he recognized me he came across with outstretched hand, and a broad grin of welcome.

"My dear fellow, what a nice surprise. Why didn't you let me know that you were coming? Then you could have come and stayed with us. You'll be much more comfortable at the hotel, but you'd get much more copy on a plantation."

It was precisely the same speech that he might have made twelve years back. But the tone, the spirit, were altogether different. Twelve years ago he would have sneered at the writer's search for copy; he would have been on his guard against a comparison between his bungalow and the hotel. He had still a distinct Oxford accent, but it was genial, not supercilious.

"Anyhow, you've got to come and have a meal with us tonight. Are you alone?"

I told him about Blunden.

"Fine! Bring him along, too. Let's meet at the club first."

"At this club or the other one?"

"This one, of course. We don't want to have all those women messing up our drinking. Don't turn up late. We have to leave by seven. I live an hour away. You'd better stay the night."

Twelve years ago in London Bevan would have been on the defensive against a new acquaintance.

"He seems happy enough," I said to the bank manager.

"Heaven knows what he's got to be happy over."

I looked forward to the evening with excitement and curiosity. In Kingstown, as in most other capitals, there are two clubs, the men's town club and the mixed country club. Usually the men's club is quiet in the evenings, but it was boat day; there were several guests and business round the bar was brisk.

The bank manager was there. Shortly after seven he touched me on the elbow. "There's something I want to show you," he said, and led me to the window.

"Do you see that?"

He did not point, but it was obvious that he was calling my attention to a slim, dusky figure who was standing ten yards away across the road beside a battered four-seater Ford. She was alone. She was bare-headed. She was dressed in a cheap printed cotton. In the dusk I could not tell if she was pretty.

"That's Sally," he said. "This is what always happens upon boat days. She stands there, so that one of us can see her and tip him off. If she has to wait over half an hour she pounds the horn, then there's hell to pay."

"They quarrel then?"

"Like blazes. She despises him."

"Why? For having married her?"

"No, for boring her. She thought that being married to a white man would mean more fun for her—just as a poor girl would expect to have more fun if she married someone rich. But as it is, she's had a great deal less. She's stuck out on that plantation all the week. When she comes in town

he can't take her to the swimming club because she's colored; he can't go to the colored club because he's white. So she sits around with her friends while he comes here and soaks."

"I see. But all the same—" I checked. Somehow I was not quite satisfied. It all seemed to dovetail in too neatly, to be too contrived like an overslick magazine short story. "Surely if he'd made an issue of it he could have taken her to the other club," I said. "They must make exceptions sometimes. They aren't all so lily white as that there, after all."

The bank manager hesitated. "Well, I don't know," he said. "There are exceptions. Yes, of course there are. In Grenada it wouldn't have mattered. They ought never to have left, of course; they ought to have insisted on staying on. And even here if it had been someone whom everyone had liked, yes. I think he could have got away with it, but with Bevan—well, you see, no one really liked him. That's the trouble with these hypothetical cases. 'What happens,' you ask, 'if a really charming fellow whom everyone respects goes and marries a half-colored girl, you surely aren't going to cut him out of your lives, are you?' Probably I suppose we wouldn't. But in actual practice things don't work out that way. It's not the really charming fellow but the fellow who's not quite so liked who puts us on that kind of spot."

I looked again out of the window. She cut a forlorn figure, standing there in the dusk beside the car. Old Penton was dead now. Had he realized before he died the ill turn that he had played his daughter in committing her to this alien marriage, in forcing her to leave Grenada? Had he had some mistaken idea of a new start in a new place or had he no other aim than the complete humiliation of

an adversary? Nothing is blinder than an old man's rage.

"That's a pretty shabby car," I said.

"It's the best Bevan can afford."

By the bar Bevan, the better for several swizzles, was recounting a metropolitan anecdote. "No," I thought. "I don't begin to understand it." I could understand his flaunting his affair with Sally. I could understand his acceptance of old Penton's ultimatum. It was not cowardice. It was being too proud to fight. I could understand his behavior, but I could not understand his manner. Why on earth should he be so genial?

It was quarter to eight before we left the club. He rested his hand affectionately on Sally's shoulder.

"We've kept you waiting, old girl, I know. I'm sorry. But this is an occasion. We don't have guests so often. Up you get, both of you. We won't be long."

Sally got in the back, with Blunden. She made no comment. Bevan chattered cheerfully the whole way home. Either he was deliberately ignoring his wife or was so used to her moods that he did not notice her.

"Here we are," he said.

It was the kind of house in which you would expect to find a colored overseer rather than the white manager of a plantation. It was one-storied, wooden, with a wide veranda. At its back was a small grove of coconut palms. In front, running almost to the porch, was the broad stretch of cotton, the small low shrubs set out in even rows like soldiers. There was no real garden, just a few bushes flanking a square of coarse savannah grass. Inside, too, was the bareness, the lack of personal possessions that you would associate with a recently promoted employee. Faded but florid curtains, two garishly vivid oleographs, and a framed advertisement poster for cigarettes, a long refec-

tory table, some straight-backed wicker chairs, a couple of long rattan chairs, two occasional tables. The floor was covered with grass mats. The long cushioned window seat was littered with children's toys, sewing, newspapers. There were not more than a dozen books in the corner of a set of shelves that served the treble purpose of dresser, sideboard and cocktail cabinet. And Bevan, if he had not reached, was within sight of, the need for

*"that which should accompany old age
as honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."*

I remembered the punctilious neatness of Bevan's flat in Bloomsbury, the long stretch of bookshelves, the black-framed etchings, the John Armstrong lampshades. Yet here Bevan had none of the self-conscious defensiveness with which fifteen years earlier he had in the same breath apologized for his flat, and informed you with the greatest truculence that if you didn't like his scheme of decoration you were an ignorant and tasteless moron. He had never had then, as he had now, the easy relaxed manner of the host.

"There's whisky on that shelf there. I'm going to splash some cold water over myself and change."

It was then that Sally spoke, for the first time.

"If you do that, the dinner'll be even more spoiled than it is already."

She spoke in a resentful tone, with a whine that was in part the expression of her mood, in part the natural West Indian sing-song. It was the first time I had seen her in the light. I was surprised to see how plain she was. One usually imagines that when a white man "goes native" he receives physical attractions of the highest order in compensation for the loss of caste. But Sally was not particularly

young. She had a shapeless kind of face with a squat nose. Her hair, which was straight, parted in the middle and drawn tightly behind her ears, gave her a severe appearance. Her eyes were fine: large, dark, long-lashed. Her teeth were white and even. But her general effect was definitely unprepossessing.

"I'd prepared dinner for eight o'clock. It's quarter to nine. You can guess what it'll be like by now."

"In that case it won't be any the worse for waiting another fifteen minutes."

As he pushed back the mosquito-netted division between the main living room and the bedroom, her voice whiningly implored him not to make a noise and wake the children. And this, I reminded myself, was the man who had thought himself too good for Lucy. I walked over to the dozen or so books that now constituted, apparently, his entire library. They were dog-eared and well-thumbed, all of them. But they were not the kind of books I should have expected. There were no signs of the Bloomsbury influence: no Eliot, Firbank, Virginia Woolf. Instead, there was a Horace, the *Iliad*, Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, the *Oxford Book of Victorian Verse*, the Everyman Shakespeare in three volumes. There were only two novels: *Torrents of Spring* and *War and Peace*: the kind of library you would have expected to find on the shelves of a college student during his last term.

I was still looking at them when Bevan came through from the bathroom. His hair was wet and brushed in the careless way that I had known it first, one sweep of a damp brush across the forehead.

"Not much of a library, is it?" he remarked. "But I must say it's all I want. Everything I need is there."

It was the kind of remark that I could have pictured him

as making fifteen years ago. But then it would have been made with a superior exclusiveness. He was now stating a fact, uncontentiously.

"Let's eat. Come on, you two."

The other two had been seated in the window. They were laughing as they came towards us. Blunden was one of those rare people who bring out the gayest side of whomsoever they happen to be with. Now that Sally was laughing, I could see her charm. She had become another person. She was carefree, irresponsible, the kind of person who could sing and dance out of a mere zest for living. Blunden had that effect on people. He was like the sun; people were warm, happy, at ease, when he was with them. He made friends quickly. I never knew anyone who could count speedier conquests in the lists of gallantry.

He insisted now on helping Sally serve the meal. She protested, but he would not listen. He took her by the hand and led her into the kitchen. From behind the curtain came the sound of clattered plates, of laughter, of mock disagreement. "No, I'll take this." "No, that's yours." "Now, be careful there." When they came back into the living room, Blunden gave an imitation of a butler. Sally, who had rarely seen a white man relaxed unless he was half drunk, was bent double with that kind of cackling laugh that only colored people can produce. All through the meal Blunden went on clowning. They had a grand time together. Which was as well. It kept down the friction between Bevan and Sally, and it also prevented us from realizing quite how bad the dinner was. For it was without exception one of the least satisfactory meals I can remember. The soup was watery. A slice of dolphin had congealed into a cool, flabby paste. The joint, on the other hand, had

sustained the full force of an hour's extra heat. Its blackened crust was a fourth of an inch thick; there was merely a core of unburned meat about the bone. The dessert, pineapples from a tin, alone was unexceptional. There was no cream, nor had the girl remembered to put the beer and soda water bottles in the ice chest. We drank lukewarm whisky with disrelish. Bevan, however, who had once deliberated so pensively on the rival merits of pre-phylloxera clarets, did not seem to notice that the meal left anything to be desired. He talked affably, easily; asking questions about London, about mutual friends. Usually, his questions had a social bias: which writer moved in the big world, who was "received," which were the fashionable restaurants, what was the fashionable dining hour? But the questions were set on a note of detached curiosity. There was never the note of personal acrimony that previously had made his questions ring like the stages of a cross-examination.

When the meal was ended, the villainous coffee drunk, he rose to his feet with the grateful sigh of one who is at ease after good fare. "Let's stroll down to the beach," he said.

Blunden turned to Sally.

"Have you got to wash up?"

"I suppose I should."

"I'll stay and help you."

She burst out laughing. The idea of a white man washing plates was ludicrously amusing.

"You'll smash them all."

"Bet you a dollar that I smash less than you."

"I never smash them."

"We'll see."

It was the kind of badinage that you used to hear on Bank Holidays on Hampstead Heath in the days when the costermongers used to drive up in their donkey-carts and pearly coats. Bevan and I left them giggling among the dirty crockery.

"It isn't far," he said. "A couple of hundred yards, at the outside."

We walked in silence. It was warm, so warm that one could leave one's coat unbuttoned. But a breeze was blowing. A moon, three quarters full, silvered the palm fronds, drawing a broad line of light across the bay, veiling with a poetic dusk the outline of the mountains. The air was scented with the small white blossom of the Antilles that is half tuberose and half gardenia. On all sides was the murmur of a tropic night: bullfrogs and crickets, the rustle of branch on branch. It was the tropics such as one dreams of finding them.

The coconut grove ran right down to the gray-black powdered sand. The tide was full. We sat under a casuarina tree, watching the successive waves quiver in long phosphorus-shot ripples among the rocks. It was one of those tropic nights for which the traveler, returned to northern latitudes, is forever a little homesick; the kind of night on which it would be easy to believe that Bevan had found ample compensation here in the exchange that he had made.

I had been long enough in the tropics, however, to know the actuality of that exchange. At that very moment mosquitoes were biting at my ankles, and the mosquito is the symbol of all the malice and poison that lies hidden in the seeming softness of the tropic scene. In Europe there is glamor in the idea of a man's "going native." But actually, a man's life with a colored girl is the exact equivalent of

a man's marrying a woman whom his friends' wives refuse to meet. Neither more nor less than that. I had no illusions about the exchange of Bevan's life.

We sat there in silence. The mosquitoes had begun to become tiresome. I remembered that I had brought out a spare pair of socks. If I put them on, I thought, I might protect my ankles.

"I won't be away a minute," I said to Bevan.

I walked back along the path. Between the bending palms the lights of the bungalow shone friendly. I hurried up the steps. Then checked. Blunden and Sally were in the window side by side. The washing-up was finished, and they were close together. At the sound of my footsteps, they moved away from one another. Blunden turned, saw who it was, put his hand to his left ear and tugged it. It was a secret sign between us. It meant, "Keep away from here. And see that other people keep away for at least an hour." It was not by any means the first time that Blunden had made that sign. I had little doubt as to the outcome.

Without my extra socks I walked back to the beach.

Bevan was seated as I had left him, looking across the bay. There was about his pose an irritating quality of complacency.

"I don't know what you've got to be so pleased about," I said.

He looked up, surprised.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. You were the most ambitious person that I've ever known. You were so ambitious that you never allowed yourself to have any fun, so ambitious that none of the things that were good enough for the rest of us, the friends, the lovers, the books, the careers, the way of life, were good enough for you. You were wretch-

edly unhappy because you weren't getting the things you wanted, you made everyone you met uncomfortable. Yet now you seem completely happy. I can't think why."

The moment I had said it I was sorry. It was hitting a man when he was down. But I'd never liked him much. He had never placed any latchet on his own tongue. Besides, I was inquisitive.

I had thought that my outburst would bring another outburst. It didn't. It brought a question. "What do *you* mean by happiness?" It was a rhetorical question. As I hesitated, he went straight on. "I've never had any doubt about that, you see. Happiness lies in the right work, in the right friends, the right way of life, the right position. You look at my life now, you say it's nothing. Of course it's nothing. Do you think I don't know that: work that is uncongenial, no position, acquaintances who speak another language, a foreign climate, a marriage that is not even friendship. I know how I've finished up. And there's no hope: not the slightest. I don't need telling that. But, even so—no, even now—I don't think that I was wrong." He paused. He was looking at the panorama of his past: with a detached, impersonal interest. So that he could speak of it with his voice level, with no note of acrimony.

"It's like this, as I see it," he went on. "The fact that one person fails does not mean that there is no such thing as success. Because one is driven to do work one hates, that does not prove that there does not exist the work in which a man can express his nature. Some men have found it. In the same way there's such a thing as friendship even though your friend betrays you; such a thing as love though your wife deceives you; such a thing as talented intellectual society though your lot has cast you among boors. Those things do exist. And I wanted them so desperately. While

there still seemed a chance that I might get them, that I might pick up what I see now is the thousandth ticket in a lottery, well, naturally, I was difficult. I saw things slipping from me that I couldn't bear to lose. It's hard to be philosophical when your life's in the making. But when it's once made, when it's spoiled, irremediably, why, that's another thing."

He paused; then said about the truest thing that I have ever heard said about the lot of human beings on this planet.

"It's quite easy to be happy, when you once know that you never will be."

A West Indian Crooner

I MET HIM FIRST in London in the spring of 1927. Though he did not know it, he was then at the peak of his success. The bright young people period was at its flood, and the bright young people "had a thing" about colored artists. Florence Mills and Paul Robeson were in London. Layton and Johnston were at the Café de Paris. In Grafton Street "Hutch" was singing his nursery rhyme series at Chez Victor. *The Black Birds* were playing to packed houses. *Nigger Heaven* was heading the best-seller lists. The Black Crow records had just arrived. It was not only an artistic, but a social craze. No party was a party without its Black Birds. A lift was going up: any number of people contrived to climb on it. Louis was one of the first ones in.

He was young, tallish, supple, with bright, bold eyes, very white teeth, and a voice that was amply adequate at a time when that kind of voice was essential, not only to every restaurateur's, but to every hostess' success. He was a bare twenty-three. Two years back he had been an obscure singer in Montmartre. It turned his head, inevitably. His swagger became a challenge, his bold eyes grew insolent. At Henri's he would sing his songs directly at some girl in the audience in such a way that his singing appeared a courtship. On the least appropriate occasions he would

display an initialed cigarette case. "Mary gave me this: charming of her, don't you think? You know her, of course: Lady Mary Rochedale. A most agreeable lady." And his eyelids would lower; not a wink, no, but as though he had withdrawn into an intimate, recollective trance. Even those who were least restrained in their enthusiasm for Black Birds admitted that Louis was nearly too much of a good thing.

At the time of our first meeting, I had just returned from the South Seas. My host had asked me a question about Tahiti. Louis listened for a minute or two with a show of interest, then interrupted.

"Tahiti, yes. It's well enough. But you should see my island. You should see St. Lucia."

I had not then been to the West Indies, and I asked him where St. Lucia was. He laughed, patronizingly. St. Lucia, he explained, was the northernmost of the Windward Islands, within sight of Martinique. In the days of the great admirals, Rodney, Nelson, Hood, it had been the key to naval power. It was high and green. "It must be lovelier, far lovelier than your Tahiti," he insisted. "In Tahiti, so you tell us, there is only that one road round the island. The interior is so overgrown that you can follow the streams a bare mile or so. But my island is cut by valleys. Every inch of valley is planted thick with sugar cane. It is so green; you cannot imagine how green it is. And there are coconut palms along the beaches: just as you described them in Tahiti. Tahiti cannot have anything we have not too. And then our fishing villages, little clumps of huts where the streams run out into the bays. And it's all so French. They still speak *patois*. I don't know how many times the island didn't change hands before it became English finally. The fishermen have French names for their

boats: such funny little boats too, with square sails."

His voice began to glow. It is impossible to reproduce the quality of a West Indian voice; it is not a question of words, of phrases, of the turning of a sentence. It is a question of tone, of a lift and pitch of voice: a sing-song quality peculiar, not only to the West Indies, but to each separate West Indian island; so that the Creole can always tell after a few minutes from which island the voice comes.

"They call St. Lucia the pearl of the West Indies. But very few people ever see it," he went on. "Many ships call there. But only for an hour or two. The tourist drives up into the hills: the *Morne* we call it. He'll bathe at Vigie, lunch or dine at the St. Antoine. They'll serve him Creole dishes; there is a fine view of the harbor from the terrace; and as likely as not he'll say, as his ship sails eastward to Barbados, 'Yes, I certainly would like to come and stay here.' He may say that. But he'll never have seen St. Lucia."

Louis paused, shrugged, went on. "The beach at Vigie, yes, that's well enough. But it's always crowded. And that row of bathing huts. No one would go to Vigie who's seen Reduit. That's the perfect beach: a great curve of yellow sand; not a hut along it, a mountain at the back of you; and to the right at the end of the curve, Gros Islet, the model fishing village. In front there's Pidgeon Island, where Rodney waited for the French fleet before the Battle of the Saints; and across the forty miles of water there's Martinique. You'll search the world and never find a beach like Reduit. And Castries. It's all right when you're looking down on it; but when you're actually down there, it's hot and noisy and there's the smell of petrol. And as for those Creole dishes at the St. Antoine, they're good enough. But you should eat Creole cooking in a Creole household. While as for that view of the harbor from the *Morne*—it's

wonderful, I'm not denying that; but it's too domestic. To see the real St. Lucia you should go where there aren't wharves and houses. You should go where the country's wild. You should go to my part of the island, to the south, to Soufrière."

Not only his voice was glowing, but his eyes. He reminded me of Josephine Baker: "*J'ai deux amours: mon pays et Paris.*"

"No tourist ever goes there," he continued. "It's under the Pitons; you must have read of them. Those two great cone-shaped mountains that rise sheer out of the sea. It's half a village—a fishing village, with its small boats and its nets hanging out to dry. But it's a town as well, with a cobbled square by the jetty, with a great banyan tree to shade it; and there's a church at the end of the main street. And it's all very clean and neat. That's where I was born: Soufrière. We had a house on the waterfront. We had a clock handed down by my great-grandfather: it had a little soldier in red uniform who came out and struck the hours on a drum. The square was always crowded with fishermen, with peasants coming down from the hills to ship their fruit. I had an accordion. In the evenings I would sing; the boys would join in the choruses; the women worked on the men's nets; the girls would dance: they'd be wearing their native costume, the French *madras*. The sun would be setting and the air'd be cool. That is the real St. Lucia."

He paused: his voice had taken on a deeper, richer tone—a tone that explained not only his success, but the nature of his success. I could understand how at certain moments to certain people he could be irresistible. He was not only a satyr, he was Pan as well.

"Sometimes, when I'm singing at my restaurant"—and I smiled, wondering how Henri would like to hear Louis

talking of "my restaurant"—"sometmes, when it's late, and the air's hot and smoky, I close my eyes, I think myself back again on to my doorstep, in the cool of the evening, with the fishermen and the peasant girls: I think myself back among them. My heart *is* in my singing then."

He had actually closed his eyes while he was speaking. I too closed mine. Behind the darkness of their lids I relived a Tahitian evening; at Taravoa; a Chrysler parked beside a Chinese store. The strumming on a banjo. The wash of water on a reef. The glint of moonlight on the palm fronds. The soft Polynesian voices. The sweet, heavy scent of the tiare. From my knowledge of other islands, I could picture his. One day I'm going to St. Lucia, I told myself.

But it was twelve years before I did.

Eighteen months later, as I have already told, I was to take a longish trip to the West Indies. In Martinique, from the beach below my bungalow, I was to see morning after morning the outline of the Pitons faint and misty across the water. But in the end I was to find myself doing what Louis had assured me every tourist did—spending a mere four hours there on my way between Dominica and Barbados.

They were, I am gratefully ready to concede, four very pleasant hours. Charles Doorly was administrator then. A car was waiting for me at the wharf. On the high terrace of Government House, we sat, he and his wife and pretty daughters, talking of his schemes, his many schemes to restore the island to its old prosperity. We sat, looking out over the harbor till the network of lights spangled the long, straight streets, till the siren of the *Lady Hawkins* sounded in the harbor: till the time came for me to leave St. Lucia, as ninety-nine in a hundred leave it, with a vivid, super-

ficial memory. It was twelve years before I was to carry my suitcase through the Customs. And in those twelve years much had happened.

From that immediately pre-war world of 1938, with its revolutions, its civil wars and threats of war, its pogroms and concentration camps, its swastikas and sickles—from that shadowed, overcast world of the late 1930's, the bright young people period of the 20's seemed centuries remote. But even before that period had closed, torpedoed by the Wall Street crash, the craze for colored singers had been superseded by other crazes; by the craze for eccentric parties—parties in swimming baths, parties in anchored yachts, by the whole *Vile Bodies* period. Long before that dark October of 1929, the boom as far as Louis was concerned had ended.

I would sometimes wonder what had happened to him.

What had happened in general I knew. That which does invariably happen in a "craze." For a while certain artists of true merit are valued above their worth: then through the exposure of their imitators they are written down. There is an interval, a readjustment, a pause, and merit finds its level. Layton, Johnston, Leslie Hutchinson—they had all got back where they belonged. Real merit was re-established. But for the others, those who like Louis had done no more than clamber on to a lift when it was going up, what had happened to them, I wondered.

I made inquiries, but no one knew. Shoulders were shrugged. He was working in some cabaret. He was back in Paris. He was in New York. He had gone off terribly. He was fat and gross. He was ignored by that part of London which for a dozen months had made an idol of him. He had been sold short like the small fry in New York who had imagined themselves millionaires during that one wild

summer. No one knew where he was. And no one cared.

It was by the merest chance that I came across him a few days before I sailed for the West Indies, in a Soho night club called the Alcove. It was a place of which I had not heard, to which I was taken by a taxi-driver; the kind of place that you could only find in a city such as London, whose drink regulations make it impossible for any reputable restaurant to stay open after two o'clock: the kind of place to which the average Londoner would never think of going more than once a year, of which he will say next morning, with a heavy head, "I can't think why on earth I went."

The Alcove was like all those places: a single long room on a basement floor; some twenty tables drawn along a wall; a small square of polished boarding; a piano at one end; no band; the air thick with smoke; a few tinselly decorations; at the head of the stairs a military-looking man in a tail coat proffering a form to the effect that you had been invited by Captain Ferguson to a bottle party and had contributed 5s. to its cost. Whisky was on sale at £2 a bottle, to be purchased by the bottle. A drab and dreary spot.

Louis was its chief attraction. He had "gone off" all right. He had not probably in actual weight put on more than a dozen pounds, but he had lost his lean, panther look. And there is a camel-hair's difference between ugliness and beauty: a milligram less, a millimeter more. He was Pan no longer. He was a satyr, gross and heavy-footed. He could not have faced the hard spotlights of a restaurant. Only in such a place as this, ill-lit and smoky, could he retain his glamor. Even his voice seemed throaty.

I had met him a bare half-dozen times. I half hoped that he would not remember me. It would embarrass him, I

felt, to be reminded by the presence of an old acquaintance of his days of prominence. But it was with a brazen grin displaying his fine row of teeth that he came across. He grasped me by the hand. He brought his left hand heavily upon my shoulder.

"This is swell. This certainly is swell. Why haven't we seen you here before? Everyone comes here now. It's nice, isn't it? Intimate. Not like those big, noisy places. You must bring your friends along. We always have good fun here. Tonight—" He paused, looked round him, shook his head. "No, there's not much here tonight. But sometimes, you should see—" He half closed his eyes, in that way of his.

Across the smoky room he caught a summoning glance: a female glance. With the old arrogance, he took his leave of me. With the old insolence, he swaggered across the room. I watched him as he leaned across the table, his neck creased in a heavy roll above his collar. As I foresaw the inevitable stages by which he must drop from one shoddy platform to another, I could not but remember the old Greek theme of retribution, of those who invite the gods' wrath by likening themselves to gods.

Six weeks later, on an afternoon of blinding rain, the *Nerissa* docked at Castries.

During the next fortnight I was to realize what Louis had meant about the half-day tourist never seeing the real St. Lucia.

Destroyed in large part by a recent fire, Castries has little architectural beauty. Vigie, though an easy ten minutes' row across the harbor, cannot compare with Reduit, which is a full forty minutes' drive. And though the view from the *Morne* is certainly melodramatic—the bay a figure of

eight; Castries below you in the hollow; across the water the outline of Martinique with Diamond Rock silvered in the sunlight; the Cul de Sac Valley, a brilliant emerald, at your back—I can understand why Louis argued that that panorama, terrific though it may be, gives you no insight into the island's life, its agriculture, its fishing, its small peasant properties. To get any real idea of one of the world's more charming islands, the tourist *does* need to stay over between boats.

But in a week he can see a lot. And that week can be a most, most pleasant one. The St. Antoine is one of the best hotels in the West Indies. It is cool, the rooms are large, and though Louis had assured me that to appreciate Creole cooking you should sample it in Creole households, I cannot suppose that he had ever entered the hotel by its front entrance. He might change his opinion if he did. The tourist arriving in St. Lucia with letters of introduction will within a few hours find himself caught up into and made a part of a varied and gracious social life. St. Lucia is not one of the richer islands. But money in the tropics is a luxury. By the European standards of that day, the Creole families of St. Lucia would have been considered poor. But there is no less entertainment and entertaining on that account. The traditions of West Indian hospitality were maintained there amply in an atmosphere of picnics, bathing, sailing, riding; most evenings at one house or another there were rum punches and savory *canapes*. My fortnight passed so quickly and so enjoyably that I do not think I should have deserted Castries had it not been for my curiosity to see Louis' home.

Yet the journey was not a hard one. Soufrière is only some fifteen miles along the coast. A small motor launch, the *Jewel*, made the round trip daily. She left, or was sup-

posed to leave, at half past two. From one o'clock onwards that section of the wharf was chaos. The narrow first-class section was jammed with packages, suitcases, baskets, sacks. The roof was very low. The steerage passengers were packed as close as their African ancestors in the Guinea slavers. Livestock was carried aft. When it rained—and the rainless day is as rare as is the sunless day in the West Indies—waterproof flaps were lowered from the room. The fumes of the engine were just, but only just, the predominant factor in the general atmosphere.

It was rough on the day that I went down. Only for brief intervals could the waterproof flaps be lifted to reveal high, scrub-covered hills, broken here and there by valleys, with sugar factories or fishing villages at their foot. On the bench beside me a young colored girl was using the shoulder of an adjacent Indian as a writing desk. Professional curiosity overcame my manners. It was a love letter, headed like any transatlantic passenger's, "On Board." It was a grammatical but impersonal little note, devoted in the main to the headache that the atmosphere of the launch was causing her. When she folded away the note before she had reached the signature, I was afraid that she was about to follow the example of the child two places off and vomit. But clearly she was a serial correspondent. Leaning her elbows on the Indian's shoulders, she scoured his scalp for white hairs which she then proceeded to extract.

I was glad when the ninety minutes of the trip were over, but as the launch swung round at last I could understand Louis' nostalgia. Set in the wide semicircle of a bay, with towering mountains at its back, with the guardian Pitons on the right, Soufrière in a catalogued description might sound a melancholy, overshadowed place. It is not, though. It is friendly, cozy, intimate; with its grove of

coconuts, its fishing nets, its sports ground fringed with casuarinas, its banyan tree on the right of the jetty to shade the cobbled square, its church at the end of its center street to give it an air of Switzerland.

As the launch drew level with the jetty, a number of urchins, barefooted, with ragged shirts and shapeless hats, rushed forward, clamorous for our bags. Twenty years earlier Louis must have looked like that, must have run forward just like that, touching his hat. "Your bag, sah. Douglas Fairbanks, sah, that's me." Running my eye along the row of chattering faces, I wondered whether for any of them a fate so romantic waited; to travel so far, to reach so high, to fall so fast. Here Louis had been born: here his family had lived—in what circumstances I did not need to ask. The setting changes, but the story of the child of humble origin who touches fame is universal. It is del Sarto's story:

*"They were born poor, lived poor and poor they died . . .
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try."*

I foresaw what I should find.

I found it, more or less.

His mother, I was told, had died; but there was an aunt left, living with a cousin in her sister's house. It was in a side street; not, as Louis had told me, on the square. It had two rooms, curtains, and some furniture. It was not actually dirty. A visiting member of a Royal Commission might indeed have considered it with approval. "The home, I presume, of the rather better kind of fisherman." It was only when I remembered that flashing of an en-

graved cigarette case that in contrast it seemed squalid.

The aunt was very old, very infirm, her body shrunken with age, so that her head appeared top heavy—she was suffering probably from some kind of dropsy. She was a macabre object, sitting in a highbacked rocking chair, in a shawl, with a long skirt falling over the hems of innumerable petticoats round swollen ankles.

She shook her head sadly when I spoke of Louis.

No, he never wrote. When his mother had died, yes, he had been kind then. He had sent some money. They had put up a nice gravestone for her. I should go and see it. But apart from that, no, not one word in all these years. The Empire broadcasts gave them their sole news of him. He sang once a fortnight. He would be singing tomorrow night. On the mantelpiece was a photograph, cut from the *Radio Times* and pasted on a sheet of cardboard. "He hasn't altered at all. He looks the same dear boy. I wish he could find some nice girl and settle down." I examined the photograph. It had come from the file room, clearly. It must be at least ten years old. Beside the rocking chair was an early nineteenth century spinet. Remembering how Louis had talked of the crowds that had gathered under the banyan tree at sundown, I supposed that his singing must be missed in Soufrière; his aunt shook her head. Louis had run away at twelve, signed on a French boat as cabin boy. They remembered him here, if they remembered him at all, as a no-account fellow, who would not work, who only cared for music. The parson's daughter used to give him lessons. But no one else had noticed him.

I was surprised, but I should not have been. It was in character that during those early months of struggle, first as a cabin boy, then in Paris as a waiter, the main spur to his ambition should have been the resolve to prove his real

worth to the cousins who had despised him. And when he had fought his way to a position from which he could afford to remember their contempt of him with a smile, it was only natural that he should dramatize, should visualize his success in terms of a conquered, subject Soufrière.

I rose to my feet. Once the rough walls of this cabin had housed ambition of sufficient power to carry such an urchin as had besieged the motor launch that afternoon to the bizarre destiny of boastfully flashed silver cases. I looked about me, missing something. The clock: where could that have gone? A chuckle came from the vast nodded head. "So he told you about that? The clock with the soldier that beat the hours. Fancy his remembering. But of course he would. He'd sit and stare for minutes before each hour so as not to miss it."

"But where is it now?"

"Where it always was. The Rectory."

"Then it wasn't yours?"

"Could we afford a clock like that? Louis only went to the rector's Bible classes so that he could look at it. We used to say that it was the only reason that he took music lessons from the rector's daughter."

And that too was in the picture.

The next day my host took me for a ride over the mountains to Quilese, where the government had established an experimental station for local agriculture. I understood during that ride what Louis had meant about the domesticity of the scenery round Castries. This, in comparison, was completely wild. A succession of intersecting valleys; no roads; just tracks, cut away by streams; winding round the side of mountains with a sheer drop on the far side; so narrow that every so often we would have to get off and

lead our horses. Along the road, groups of peasants carrying huge bunches of bananas passed us on their way to the coast. An occasional youth with a shotgun showed us a bag of pigeon. The path led us through Fond St. Jaques, a group of cabins with children playing under trees, women tending babies, hens wandering at large, pigs tethered against stakes. It was very simple; very primitive. It had a casual, South Sea atmosphere. The men would be lucky to work three days a week on the plantations: their wages would be small. But they had their gardens, they had their allotments: they could raise their own crops, keep their pigs and poultry. They grumbled, but they were not unhappy.

It was from circumstances such as these that Louis' original ancestors had come. He was ashamed of that jungle background; and no doubt the house in Soufrière, with its two rooms, its furniture, its spinet, represented from one point of view an advance in progress. But there was no doubt as to which life was the cleaner, happier, healthier: the life of "civilization" in the narrow alleys of the town, or this primitive existence in the clear air of the bush. Nor could there be any doubt as to the way of living from which Louis, as every other colored artist, had drawn his strength. The depth and power in his voice had sprung out of nostalgia, was the cry of an exiled spirit. And as I rode on, I pondered such reactionary reflections as have fretted most of those who have been brought into touch with primitive native life. To what point, I asked myself, do we educate these simple people, unfitting them for the life to which the centuries have trained them, transporting them into an alien world, where even such a success as Louis' is purchased at a price whose payment must be in the end regretted.

At Quilese there was a resthouse where we ate our sandwich lunch. It was late in the day when we returned. It was several months since I had ridden, and I was grateful for the warm sulphur bath, in the stone basin that Louis XVI had had built there for his soldiers.

I wallowed lazily; so lazily that it was close on six before I was changed.

In Soufrière there is no club. Every morning the two main planters drive down to the wharf, and, sitting in their Chevrolets, transact there the majority of their business. Social life is confined to the bridge four that meets every evening in the house of the retired colonel who was my host and to the preprandial cocktail proffered in turn by one or other of the other three. We were on our way that evening to the house of the chief planter of the district, an Englishman by fact of residence, but so French in name and birth that the half of his older relatives could barely make themselves understood in English.

Our road lay through the town, along the waterfront. The sun was low in the sky. The air was cool. The work of the day was finished. A large miscellaneous group was gathered in the square: women sewing at the nets; fishermen puffing at their pipes; children tumbling over each other in the gutters; young men lounging against the trees; old women on their doorsteps in their native costume, the French *madras*; girls in groups, chattering and giggling; a couple of policemen, very smart and upright in their blue tunics and white helmets. There was a buzz of talk. But louder than the buzz of talk came the sound of music. "What's this?" I asked. "A wake?"

My host shook his head. "Only a radio with a loud-speaker. They often come out here in the evening."

Then I remembered. The Empire broadcast: Louis. "Let's stop," I said.

We waited, listened. The organ voluntary concluded. The voice of the announcer crackled through a blur of static; then the static stopped. A rich, full voice came through it: a familiar voice. A song that was ten years old! "*That's my weakness now.*"

Did one person in that noisy group realize whose voice they heard? Clear and full, it rang across the square.

*"I never cared for eyes of blue;
But she's got eyes of blue,
And that's my weakness now."*

The buzz of talk subsided. A couple began to dance. It was just such a scene as Louis had described to me.

I pictured him, three thousand miles away. It would be ten o'clock in London. He would resent having to go out into the cold of a January night. He would be taking it very casually: an Empire broadcast; a small fee. He would resent having to accept such work. He would be in his ordinary day clothes. Shabby clothes, most likely, for he only needed to look smart at night: clothes cut to an earlier fashion, that fitted him too tightly. As likely as not he would be unshaven. There would be no audience in the studio. He would take off his coat and collar. Standing there, half dressed, there would be nothing to distinguish him from these cousins of his grouped here under the banyan tree. Had he the imagination to picture them here, listening? I doubted it. His mind would already be upon the evening's work. The songs he would sing, the guests who would be there. His eyes would brighten at the thought of

a blonde who had come there three nights running with a dreary and surely unimportant escort. As his eyes brightened, a new richness would come into his voice, so that three thousand miles away along a waterfront young couples across a cobbled square would smile into each other's eyes.

Here was his ambition realized: his boyhood's dream. The cousins who had mocked him were summoned to the square, to be held there, subjugated by his voice. Before me was the gay-colored throng, in my ears the rhythm of that rich full voice, before memory's eye a shabby, discredited figure by a microphone.

The music stopped. The announcer had taken Louis' place. Another performer was beckoned across the studio. I pictured Louis pulling a muffler round his throat, hurrying out into the cold, to the small bed-sitting room in his Bloomsbury lodging house, to bathe and shave and change, to take his place at the piano in the Alcove. A passage from an early Gilbert Cannan novel crossed my memory—a passage to the effect that we always get out of life the thing we ask for, but never "according to the letter of our desire."

The Islands One By One

THE CAPRICE of history has made each island in some way different from its neighbors. I think, therefore, that it would be a convenience to close this book by setting down in brief synopsis the chief facts about each island.

General. From time to time various groupings of the islands have been in use. The early Spanish colonists called the larger northern islands the Windward Islands, and those to the east the Leeward Islands. But the names Windward and Leeward are now only applied to two groups of British islands. At one time the West Indies were known as the Antilles, because it was believed that they formed a part of the continent of Antilla, which was held to exist some two hundred miles east of the Azores. The islands of Cuba, Jamaica, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico are still sometimes known as the Greater Antilles, while the eastern Islands are known as the Lesser Antilles. The American group of St. John and St. Thomas are classified as the Virgin Group. For the purposes of this record, it has seemed however more convenient to treat each island separately and alphabetically.

Anguilla. A small British island in the Leeward Group, with a population of five thousand. It is very subject to

drought. The land is in the hands of peasant proprietors who cultivate cotton, sweet potatoes and who rear sheep, goats and cattle. Phosphate of lime and salt are its principal exports.

Antigua. The chief island in the Leeward Group was discovered by Columbus in 1493 and was named after a church in Seville, Santa Maria la Antigua. It was uninhabited until a body of English settlers took possession of it in 1632. Except for a few months in 1666, when it was raided by the French, Antigua has remained English ever since; it is, next to Barbados, to which it bears many affinities, the most English of the islands, and like Barbados it remained Royalist during the Civil War.

Its chief interest historically is its close connection with Lord Nelson. It was here that he paused during his chase of Villeneuve in the long pursuit that ended in the Battle of Trafalgar,* and here, twenty years earlier, when he commanded the *Boreas*, he spent many unhappy months. The American War of Independence had ended recently and a number of American ships which had been on the British register before the Declaration were continuing to trade between the islands and America, taking advantage of a dual nautical nationality, "getting it both ways" with the navigation laws of either country and contravening the British law that forbade trade between America and the islands except in British ships owned and navigated by British subjects. The Customs officers, who were amply bribed, were well satisfied with the arrangement. The residents of the island had long established friendly relations with the shipowners who had recently been their com-

* There is a local tradition that his ships refitted there, though it is doubtful if they did so, as he only remained in port for twenty-four hours.

patriots, and by this means obtained American goods at a better price. It was an arrangement that suited everyone except the officials of the Imperial Exchequer. And Nelson's resolve to put an end to these illegal practices made him exceedingly unpopular. The residents did not call, and no hospitality was offered him. It is possible that his chilly reception was responsible for his lukewarm marriage with the widow to whom he first endeared himself by romping on all fours under the drawing-room table with her son. Had he not been subjected to three years' loneliness he might have been less vulnerable to the attractions of domesticity and Emma Hamilton's last years might have been very different.

The naval barracks at English Harbor, where his sailors rested and refreshed, have now been handed over to the local authorities, who lack the funds to support them as a national monument, and in a few years' time they will doubtless have begun to crumble. The timber of the wooden house in which Nelson lived was cracked and porous. But the two-storied red-roofed yellow buildings of the barracks must have seemed to me very much as they did to Nelson when he looked down on them from Clarence House.

English Harbor is only an hour's drive from the capital, St. John, and every visitor to the island should make the trip there.

For those coming to the Caribbean by the Harrison Line from Europe, Antigua is the first West Indian island, and in many ways it is untypical. Largely of coral formation, it is for the most part flat and dry. Deforestation and lack of springs make it subject to drought. And in the hills you will find a number of large, sloping concrete reservoirs which were constructed in the plantation days to catch and

store the rain. Sugar and molasses are the only important exports.

Its capital was destroyed by fire in 1797 and again in 1841, and though the cathedral, standing upon rising ground and looking out over the harbor, is not unimpressive, the town has little architectural distinction, though there are some interesting Georgian doorways.

All round the island there are excellent beaches. There is a good hotel, the Kensington, in St. John's, and there is the Beach Hotel on the northeast coast. American capital is building a large club colony at Mill Reef and Antigua is likely to become a popular tourist resort.

Antigua is pronounced Anteeega.

Aruba. A Dutch island with an area of sixty-nine square miles and a population of eleven thousand, where gold is mined and phosphate. It is prosperous and attracts labor from the British islands.

Barbados. For those traveling to the West Indies from Europe by the Elder and Fyffe banana boats, Barbados is, as is Antigua for those traveling by the Harrison boats, the first West Indian island, and although for West Indians themselves it is the most popular island as a holiday resort, for many it must, as an introduction to the tropics, be a disappointment. It has none of the highmountained splendor of Trinidad nor the luxurious foliage of Colombo. With its nickname of "Little England," it seems at a first glance another Isle of Wight; less foreign than Alderney or Guernsey. The Negroes who clamber on to the ship to dive for pennies seem as out of place, as inappropriate, as the white soles of their feet against the ebony of their ankles. It takes time to appreciate its particular and peculiar charm, its "lived-in" atmosphere.

Barbados is the most English of the islands. No other

flag has flown there. Not once has it been invaded. Undiscovered by Columbus, it was visited by some Portuguese sailors in the sixteenth century, who christened it Los Barbados because of its bearded fig trees and considerably left some pigs behind them for the benefit of any sailors who might be shipwrecked there. When the first English settlers arrived it was to find themselves unopposed. Caribs are believed to have lived there once, but in February, 1627, it was on an uninhabited island that the first English stores were landed.

The Barbadian story is one of a steadily maintained tradition, unbroken since the days of the first settlement. In a sense it has less "history" than any of the other islands. It was affected inevitably by the various wars with France, suffering considerably during the American War of Independence through its inability to trade with the Thirteen Colonies, and in the Napoleonic Wars it was only saved from invasion at the last moment. But it has been spared the sieges, the massacres, the riots of which practically every other island except Antigua has been the victim. Hurricanes and slumps alone have disturbed the rhythm of its existence. Its lack of drama is, however, due as much as other islands' excess of drama to the caprice of history. It is the most eastern island. The prevailing wind blows from the east. It was very difficult in the days of sail for an enemy to attack it from the west. The defender was always at an advantage.

Its lack of history has made Barbados unique. It has also given it a personal intimate charm that none of the other islands have to the same extent. It may not be attractive at first sight—or, rather, it may be disappointing at a first sight because it is not attractive in a particular, in an expected way. For although there is a very real beauty about the

broad brown river that curves by the Costa warehouses, between the low wooden wharves, past the cluster of barges and of schooners, the tourist leaning against the taffrail may well grumblingly inquire where are the bright colors, where is the scene of spectacle by which the agency folders had lured him to the ticket counter.

And, indeed, for a twenty-four-hour stay it can hardly fail to be a disappointment. There is not a great deal to do or see. The island is very flat. There is a lack of fine views. There is a monotony about the endless fields of sugar cane. There are sandy beaches and the aquatic club, which is open to visitors, has a good pier and a café and its gramophone will play to you while you swim. But it is very crowded. If you ask the advice of a tourist tout, he will suggest that you drive over to the Crane for lunch. The Crane is on the other side of the island. It is an hour's drive. The sugar cane is so high on either side of the road that you will not see a lot. The Crane is a comfortable hotel. You will get a good lunch; you will sample its specialty, fried flying-fish; you will sit on a terrace and watch the Atlantic breakers beat against the rocks. It is all quite impressive, but it is not what you expected when you booked your ticket. I have heard more than one round-trip tourist say, "Oh, yes, I had a grand time in the end, but I must say that I felt a little alarmed when I saw Barbados. If it's all going to be like that, I thought—" I have not, however, met anyone who has stayed there any length of time and who took the preliminary precaution of acquiring suitable letters of introduction who did not come to appreciate the intimate quality of the island.

Barbados has an integrated family atmosphere that the other islands lack. In many ways it is more prosperous. It is one of the most densely populated territories in the

world—over one thousand to the square mile. The blacks outnumber the whites by nine to one. But though Barbados is almost the only island where the color line is still strictly drawn,* the loyalty of the Negroes for their island is very great. They have known no other masters, and when slavery was abolished they continued to work happily on their old estates as hired men, nor did their masters show any great haste to hurry back to England and invest their compensation money there.

There are many old-established families in Barbados. My London solicitor, when he heard that I was going out, gave me a letter of introduction to some cousins of his there. They lived some twenty miles out of Bridgetown in a fine Georgian plantation house; on one of the walls I saw a reproduction of the portrait of a venerable gentleman in eighteenth century breeches and scarlet coat which hangs over the mantelpiece of my friend's London dining room. "That's a very familiar picture," I remarked. My host nodded. "You've seen that in Ted's dining room, I suppose. He was Governor in the 1820's. Ted belongs of course to a junior branch that went back to England." I have always thought of my solicitor with his long legal background as a direct scion of the eighteenth century. It was strange to hear him spoken of as part of a junior branch. It was strange too to hear of the elder son staying in a colony and the younger son going to England to seek his fortune. But that reversal of the customary rôles is not untypical of Barbados.

And indeed it is very appropriate that it should be in connection with a figure so Augustan as my solicitor that I should have had just that experience. For the eighteenth

* In 1897 Barbados was the only island that would not include colored players on its cricket team against Lord Hawke's touring side.

century marked the great period of West Indian prosperity, and in Barbados the eighteenth century is still alive. It was in that period that the majority of the plantation houses were built—thick-walled brick houses of formal, dignified proportions. The rooms are high and cool and rather dark as a protection against the sun; against the walls there is the glow of old, well-polished wood and the gleam of brass; on the desks are the inkwells of an earlier day and at night the tables are bright with silver. There is a parade slightly starched atmosphere about it all that is very welcome after the general informality of the tropics. A planter from Jamaica arriving in Barbados would feel very much like a New York visiting in Boston.

Barbados is very well provided with hotels, from the *grand luxe* of the Marine and the Ocean View to unpretentious inexpensive boarding houses where the accommodation is invariably clean and the food well served. The bathing is excellent and the climate pleasant. The dry, cool season lasts from December to the end of May. There is hardly any malaria. Sugar is the chief product, though cotton has recently become important.

Barbuda. A small British island twenty-five miles north of Antigua with a population of one thousand. It was annexed by the English in 1628 and later granted to the Codrington family, who held it for two hundred years. It is flat and well-wooded. Cotton is the leading product, but it also exports salt, phosphate of lime and turtle.

Cuba. With a population of over four million, Cuba is the largest and most important territory in the Caribbean. It has always, however, stood outside the general pattern of West Indian life. First colonized by the Spaniards in

1513, it was only once successfully attacked by the British in 1762, to be returned in the following year in exchange for the Floridas. This brief occupation of Havana was of considerable benefit to the island, as the British opened the port to commerce and the Government of Spain was subsequently persuaded to modify its old monopolistic system of colonial trade, Cuba receiving special privileges.

General mismanagement through the nineteenth century led finally to American intervention in the Spanish-American war, and the recognition of Cuban independence. Cuba has a dry season from November to April.

Curaçao. The capital of the small group of Dutch West Indian islands, which contain in all a population of a quarter of a million, barely a fifth of whose trade is directed to the mother country. It was occupied by the Spaniards in 1537, but the Dutch have held it since 1634, except during 1798 and 1806 to 1814, when the British occupied it.

Salt, phosphate and cattle are exported. The liqueur curaçao was originally made here.

It is prosperous and attracts labor from the British islands.

Dominica was discovered by Columbus in 1493 on Sunday, November 3, and consequently christened by him Dominica. It was at that time occupied by Caribs, and though the French began to settle there in the 1630's, it was agreed in the treaty of 1660 that, in company with St. Vincent, it should be left in the undisturbed possession of the natives. Lying as it does, however, midway between Martinique and Guadeloupe, it was inevitable that French immigration should continue, and before long it had come

under the control of the French governor. In 1748 it was again declared neutral at the Treaty of Aix la Chapelle, but French settlements continued, and through the later half of the eighteenth century it was the scene of fighting. In 1756 it was captured by the British, to whom it was conceded in 1763 by the Peace of Paris. In 1778, however, it was recaptured by the French, to be held by them for five years until the Battle of the Saints, which was fought within sight of its mountains, restored British prestige in the Caribbean. It was invaded again in 1795, and in 1805 General la Grange captured the capital, Roseau, extorting from its inhabitants an indemnity of twelve thousand pounds. He plundered the island, but was unable to retain possession of it. For one hundred forty years Dominica has remained a British colony, but the French influence is still very strong, and the natives talk an African-French *patois*. There is a good deal of smuggling from the neighboring French islands. A Roman Catholic bishop is in residence at Roseau.

Grenada was greatly affected by the Revolution. Discovered by Columbus in 1498, it was not settled until it came into French possession in the middle of the seventeenth century. During the later part of the eighteenth century it changed hands several times. It was captured by the British in 1762 and ceded to them by the Treaty of Paris in 1763. It was recaptured by the French in 1778, to be restored to Great Britain in 1783. During this period of divided allegiances, great dissension arose between the French and British planters, who took reprisals on their adversaries each time their own party came into power. It was a community divided against itself, and when the Revolution came, the French, who after the Treaty of Versailles had

been robbed of their political rights and their Church land, appealed to the revolutionaries in Guadeloupe. In 1795, Grenada was captured by the French and for fifteen months the island was sacked and pillaged, the plantation houses burned and their owners massacred. In June, 1796, Grenada was recaptured by the British. But those fifteen months decided the future of Grenada.

As the result of this massacre of the white planters, the island was one of the first to adopt the system of peasant proprietorship, and Sir Algernon Aspinall, writing in 1928, describes it as being "one of the few that can be described as having been really prosperous in recent years." In part this was because Grenada is not dependent, as are so many other islands, upon sugar—rum and molasses being made mainly for local consumption—its two chief exports being cocoa and nutmegs; in part because, while the big plantation system has been slowly crumbling in the other islands, the peasant proprietor system which is being increasingly adopted throughout the Caribbean had a fifty years' start here in Grenada. Before the big plantation system had begun to crumble and the peasant proprietor system had been effectively developed, conditions in Grenada compared unfavorably with those existing among its neighbors. Froude, visiting it in the 1880's, wrote: "The harbor is the best in the West Indies. But there was not a vessel in it, nor so much as a boatyard where a spar could be replaced or a broken rivet mended. Once there had been a line of wharves, but the piles had been eaten by worms and the platforms had fallen through. Round us when we landed were unroofed warehouses, weed-choked courtyards, doors gone and window frames fallen in or out. Such a scene of desolation and desertion I never saw in my life but once, a few weeks later in Jamaica. Not Baby-

lon itself, with its bats and owls, was more dreary and desolate."

The scene there today is very different. No visitor to the island has failed to appreciate the beauty of its harbor. Its capital, St. George's, is built on the saddleback of a spur. As you approach it from St. Vincent, you see what looks like a wharf with a church surmounting a steep hill. There is a fort in front of you, and a radio station to your left. But to your surprise you do not dock where you had expected to, at what you had taken to be a wharf. You swing slowly round what you realize now to be a spur, and there on your left is a second inner harbor, with a fort on your right and an old white barracks in disrepair. Sailboats are tacking in the harbor; sloops and schooners bound for the Grenadines are moored against the wharves. St. George's has been spared the earthquakes and fires of which practically every town in the group has been the victim; red brick houses with tiled roofs still stand along the waterfront. There is bustle and animation along the quay. Cargo is being loaded and unloaded. There is a great deal of noise, and above it and beyond it are the hills, green and cool, studded with bungalows, the deep green broken here and there with the pale orange pink immortelle that spreads its shelter over the growing cocoa plant.

Grenada is now being developed to attract the tourist trade.

The Grenadines. An archipelago of some hundred islands stretching between Grenada and St. Vincent, a few of which are cultivated. They can be visited by sloop or schooner.

Guadeloupe. The largest and after Martinique the most important French possession in the West Indies. Discov-

ered by Columbus in 1493 and christened after the monastery of St. Maria de Guadelupe at Istremadura, it was occupied by the French in 1635. It was several times invaded by the British, but without success until it was captured in 1759. It was returned, however, at the Treaty of Paris four years later. The British recaptured it in 1794, but a few weeks later they were driven out by Victor Hugues. Between 1810 and 1816 it came again under British rule. The story of what happened there during the Revolution has already been told. The old plantation system never recovered from the massacres of Victor Hugues, but on a new basis a prosperous way of life has been created there. Half of the island is planted with sugar. The other crops include cocoa, cotton, vanilla, coffee, and bananas.

There is little to attract and little effort is made to attract the tourist. Guadeloupe consists actually of two separate islands, Basse Terre, a rugged group of mountains, and Grande Terre, where the land never reaches a height of five hundred feet. The two islands are divided from each other by a narrow river of sea. The seat of government is at Basse Terre, but the largest town and the main port is on Grande Terre, at Pointe à Pitre. Guadeloupe is exceedingly subject to hurricanes, and when I last visited Pointe à Pitre in December, 1928, it was to find it in a pitiable condition with shacks piled up in heaps at every corner and rain pouring through the roof of the cathedral.

I have never met anyone who has ever stayed in Guadeloupe, and I would not recommend to stay there anyone who has not a collector's interest in obtaining information that very few other English or Americans will possess. There is, or was, however, a good hotel in the hills above Basse Terre, and there is a warm spring at Dolé. Inter-

island steamers often stop at Pointe à Pitre in the morning and move round to Basse Terre in the afternoon. A good excursion can be made by hiring a car at Pointe à Pitre, driving across Grande Terre, taking a hot spring bath at Dolé, lunching in the hills and catching the boat at Basse Terre afterwards.

Before World War II, like Martinique, Guadeloupe was very prosperous, as its trade interests with the home market were protected. During World War II, it suffered greatly through being forced to accept Vichy rule. Great privation was endured. The island was blockaded. Today there is much political unrest and the black market flourishes.

Haiti. More has been written about Haiti than any island in the world except Tahiti. The main facts about its early history have been given in a previous chapter. H. P. Davis's *Black Democracy* is, in my opinion, the best historical book about it.

In 1824 France recognized its independence and the first Negro republic was left to work out its destiny. The way in which it worked it out during the next ninety years has provided those who maintain that Negroes are incapable of self-government with their most effective argument. Not a great deal is known about what happened there during the first part of this period. No white man was allowed to own land or conduct business. White visitors were few. The ruling classes in the neighboring islands looked on Haiti in very much the same spirit that the ruling classes in Europe looked on Soviet Russia in the 1920's. Anxious lest their own laborers should follow the example of the Haitians, they welcomed every account of mismanagement and injustice. They believed everything that was whis-

pered to the detriment of the Haitian administrators, and they were delighted when Spencer St. John, the British *chargé d'affaires*, published an account of voodoo practices, cannibalism and human sacrifice. There is no means of judging now the truth of Spencer St. John's allegations, but it would have been extremely surprising if voodoo practices had not been resorted to here and there, when a million and a half liberated Africans were suddenly consigned to their own devices. The one thing of which we can be certain is that gradually over those ninety years the machine of government broke down.

There was no stable government. Of the twenty-three presidents who held office between 1818 and 1915, two only were allowed to retire peacefully. Eleven served for less than a year. Fourteen were deposed by revolution and four were murdered. Eight only succeeded in maintaining themselves in office for a period equal to their elected term. As revolution followed revolution, the machinery became more clogged. The supporters of each revolution had to be bribed with office on their nominee's election. The public services became corrupt. In the army the ratio of officers to privates was very high. The police did not attempt to keep order outside the city limits. Brigandage was rampant in the hills. The currency was debased. The interest was not paid on foreign loans. The island, rich though it was in natural resources, meager though the standard of living that it maintained, was no longer able to pay its way. The cultural links with France had been maintained in spite of the political break, and many of the richer families sent their children to Paris to be educated. During my stay in Port au Prince in 1929, I was very conscious of the existence there of a genuinely cultured intelligentsia. But during the end of the last century and during the first

fifteen years of this, the small educated class was not strong enough to keep power within its hands. It could not keep pace with modern methods of business, government and finance. The gangsters, the opportunists, the racketeers obtained control.

The speed of deterioration quickened. In August, 1911, the eighteenth president was deposed by a revolution. By March 5, 1915, he had had six successors. Three were deposed by revolution, one was blown up in his palace, a fifth was poisoned. The end came four months later. In July, General Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam, who had been president since March, believing a counter-revolution was in preparation, ordered the arrest in Port au Prince of some hundred and seventy of his chief opponents. The revolution began and President Sam, believing that he was without support, fled to the French Legation for protection. In the meantime, whether under his orders or not, the commandant of the prison had ordered the death of every political prisoner in jail. These prisoners, who included members of the best and most influential families in Haiti, were in cold blood and without trial massacred and mutilated in their cells with cutlasses. At that point the United States Navy intervened.

For several months an American warship had been patrolling Haitian waters in defense of foreign interests, and it was in keeping with the comic opera atmosphere of the average Haitian revolution that an American admiral should have issued instructions as to how the revolutions were to be conducted. He had no intention, he wrote on one occasion, of questioning the sovereignty of the Haitian nation or of maintaining any but a neutral attitude towards the contending factions. He had, however, "to insist that no fighting take place in the town of Cap Haitien and that

contending factions fight their battles well clear of the town." The murder of a hundred and seventy prominent citizens was clearly a breach of these instructions.

When the inhabitants of Port au Prince saw the smoke of an American warship within their harbor, they realized that, unless they acted quickly, their chances of revenging themselves on their ex-president were slight, and the mob surged to the French Legation. "A small body of well-known citizens, after courteously explaining to the French minister that the people were no longer to be balked of their revenge, entered the house, dragged Sam down the stairs and threw him over an iron gate to the mob. The body was cut to pieces" and was being paraded through the streets as the American marines marched in. The independence of the first Negro republic was at an end.

That independence now, after a tutelary period, has been restored. As to Haiti's future, only a rash man would prophesy with confidence, but there is certainly no island in the group that in its own way more repays a visit. It is very beautiful. There is good hotel accommodation. Many of the old stone-built French houses still remain, with their wrought-iron gateways and balconies and stone-paved courtyards. The past is still alive here. There is, moreover, in the bush a happy-go-lucky South Sea island atmosphere that you will not find elsewhere in the Caribbean. There has been little intensive cultivation. The land has been split up among peasant proprietors whose needs are slight and who have grown what they themselves require. Their estates are haphazard collections of coffee and sugar cane and banana plants. For two generations many of the peasants had never seen a white man, and their descendants have no sense of inferiority towards them. The Haitians are friendly in a way that the natives of Martinique are not

and could not hope to be. The Haitians have long lost their sense of resentment and hatred against the whites. One meets them upon equal terms.

There is, moreover, for the visitor at Cap Haitien one of the most photographed and most remarkable buildings in the modern world, the citadel that Christophe built to defend himself against the next French invasion.

Jamaica. The largest British West Indian island, with a population in 1943 of a million and a quarter, Jamaica was captured under Cromwell's orders by Penn and Venables in 1655. It had been discovered by Columbus in 1494, who ten years later was stranded for a year on its northern coast. The Indian name was Xaymaca, the isle of springs.

After the original Indian population was exterminated, the eight noble Spanish families among which the island was divided made such little use of their possession that the entire population, white and African, consisted in 1655 of a bare three thousand. In consequence, the only traces left a few years later of the Spanish occupation were the beautiful buildings of Sant Iago de la Vega, which remained the capital, under the name Spanish Town, until 1872, and the Maroons, a band of escaped Spanish slaves who took to the mountains and conducted a régime of brigandage for over a century. In spite of its century and a half's existence as a Spanish colony, Jamaica is very nearly as British as Barbados. Though invasion was threatened at the end of the American War of Independence, the danger was averted by the Battle of the Saints, and no foreign force has ever landed on Jamaican soil.

Jamaica's history is of a domestic nature. There have been innumerable hurricanes and earthquakes, and as re-

cently as 1907 practically every building in Kingston was destroyed. There has been also a good deal of local fighting—with the Maroons and with rebel slaves. In early days, Port Royal was one of the chief resorts of the buccaneers and was reputed to be the wickedest city in Western waters, its destruction by an earthquake in 1692 being regarded as a judgment of heaven.

Throughout the eighteenth century Jamaica was exceedingly prosperous. It produced sugar, coffee, cocoa, ginger, indigo and pimento and was a depot for the slave trade. Lady Nugent's journals and Monk Lewis' *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* give an effective picture of the patrician manner in which the big planters lived. That ease and luxury passed with the emancipation of the slaves, and by 1865 the internal finances of the island were in so deplorable a state and discontent against living conditions and high taxation was so great that very serious riots ended in many deaths and the hanging of the spokesman, G. W. Gordon.

Today, although the living conditions of the laborer and the peasant are, as has been already stated, little if any better than they were in the plantation days, Jamaica is a prosperous island. For the tourist it is one of the playgrounds of the world. It can be as expensive or as cheap, within limits, as you choose to make it. It offers everything in the way of sport. There are hotels in the hills and there are hotels along the beaches. It is very beautiful. I have read nothing in Jamaica's praise that has seemed to me an exaggeration.

The birth rate has been increasing recently at an alarming rate, and there is a danger that in a few years' time the island will not be able to support its population.

Martinique was discovered by Columbus either in 1493 or 1502. It was settled by the French in 1637 and seventeen years later three hundred Jews who had been expelled from Brazil landed there. At first cotton and tobacco were the chief products, but sugar was soon introduced and later the coffee plant. It was attacked by the British in 1666, 1667 and 1693 and by the Dutch in 1674. It was a British possession between 1762-3, 1793-1801, 1809-14. During World War II Martinique was under the control of Vichy and presented a tricky problem to the Anglo-American command. It is possible that the true story of what happened and of what nearly happened will never be fully told. It is certain that the people of Martinique suffered very great privations. At the moment the situation is a tangle of political and industrial unrest.

Montserrat was discovered by Columbus in 1493 and named after the mountain monastery in Catalonia. Colonized by the British under Sir Thomas Warner in 1632, it came under French rule between 1664 and 1668, and 1782 and 1784. A number of Irishmen were settled here by Oliver Cromwell, and Sir Algernon Aspinall states that there were at one time three thousand Irish families in the island. A shamrock adorns the center gable of Government House. Its chief products are sea island cotton and lime juice; it also exports tomatoes. It was very seriously damaged by a series of earthquakes in the early and middle 1930's, and when I paused there in 1938 for a few hours on my way up to Boston, the capital, Plymouth, had an air of St. Pierre with shacks going up among stone foundations. It has recovered, however, very gallantly, and with a population of fourteen thousand has a relatively balanced budget.

Montserrat is a port of call for both the Alcoa and the Canadian National Steamship Lines. But it has not an airfield yet. It is not often visited by tourists. If you were to plan to spend a week there, you would almost certainly have to make the trip at least one way in a small open motor launch. Myself I had to take the launch both ways and one of the trips was exceedingly unpleasant. I should never indeed have gone there unless my old friend, Charlesworth Ross, who was at the time commissioner, had asked me to be his guest. Had I failed to accept his invitation, I should have failed to see the most lovely island in my experience, and that experience includes Colombo and Penang.

Montserrat includes within its narrow confines all of the separate and varied features that distinguish and adorn the other islands. Much of its sand is black, but it has white beaches too. Its interior is mountainous, its highest mountain being over three thousand feet; but the mountains do not jostle one another as they do in Dominica. They stand alone, with the ground sloping downwards, gently, through forest and coconut groves to the trim cotton fields and the rows of lime trees. The green upon its flanks is as vivid as in Dominica. But the whole thing has a designed, architectural effect that Dominica lacks. Moreover, because the mountains are not clustered close, you have a sense of breadth and distance. In Dominica you look down and you look up, but you never look across. In Montserrat you look from one plateau to another, over deep, broad valleys.

I made a trip on foot across the island; it took a bare four hours and the paths were neither abruptly steep nor slippery. It was easy going: "a nice little walk" in fact. We passed the crater of a volcano. The air was sickly with the

smell of sulphur. It was a vast vat of a cauldron, with its rocks stained green and yellow and the tepid steaming water cloudily, milkily white like Syrian Arak. St. Lucia can offer nothing more impressive. And when we crossed the center, and could see the white line of foam along the windward beach, there was that same sense of entering a new barbaric kingdom that I had felt in Dominica.

At one time Montserrat was predominantly a sugar island, but the collapse of sugar was not followed by the collapse of a whole way of living. The planters, finding that they could no longer profitably market sugar, switched over to limes and cotton. Plantations were not abandoned nor the ground let run to waste. The old stone windmills stand now as picturesque relics over the countryside, and the houses are built among the ruins of old aqueducts and the round mills that the oxen worked. Only in Barbados will you find the fabric of the old world of sugar as well preserved. There is a good hotel in Montserrat.

Nevis, the birthplace of Alexander Hamilton, preserves in the vestry of its Fig Tree Church the record of Nelson's marriage. It was christened "Nievis" because the clouds that perpetually overhang its mountains have a look of snow. The island is almost circular and from the sea has the appearance of a perfect cone. It was colonized in 1628 by the English, who had been driven by the Spaniards from St. Kitts. At one time it did a lively business in sugar and cotton and lemons and shared in the general prosperity of its larger neighbors. Its thermal springs attracted many wealthy landlords to take the cure. The old Bath House, which was a fashionable center in its day, is being reopened as a hotel.

Puerto Rico. A Spanish colony from 1493, Puerto Rico came under American rule as a result of the Spanish-American War of 1898. Like Cuba, it has lain outside the general pattern of West Indian life. It was attacked several times by the British, the French and the Dutch during the sixteenth and early part of the seventeenth century, but it was never captured.

Saba and St. Eustacius, two small islands in the Dutch West Indies. Saba is a volcanic cone five miles in extent that rises abruptly to a height of three thousand feet. Its town stands at a height of eight hundred feet on an old crater floor, and has to be approached by steps cut into the solid rock. Curiously enough, although it has practically no beach or maritime life, it builds the finest boats in the Caribbean. The wood is imported and the vessels, when finished, are lowered over the face of the cliffs. English is spoken there.

St. Barthelmy. A small French island that, occupied by France in 1648, was ceded to Sweden in 1784, to be repurchased by France a century later. It has an English-speaking population of twenty-five hundred, mainly of French and Negro origin. I stopped there for a few hours in 1929 in the *Antilles*, a small, neat French cargo boat that plied between Haiti and Martinique. The monthly arrival of this ship was the big event in the life of an island that had no cars, no cinema, no newspapers and no news. Cows and bullocks swam out at the edges of canoes to be drawn up by the horns for shipment to Guadeloupe. The island girls put on their smartest frocks, rowed out to the ship for its three hours' sojourn, to dance in the small saloon, on a hot Caribbean afternoon, to be stood liqueurs,

to be photographed, to take and leave addresses, then, when the siren went, to scamper back into their canoes to another four uneventful weeks.

St. Christopher's (or St. Kitts), the first British settlement in the West Indies, was sighted by Columbus in 1493, who named it St. Christopher's because its rugged outline reminded him of the saint carrying his burden. It was first settled by the English in 1623, and a little later a French privateer that was being harried by the Spaniards sought protection there. The English, who were having trouble with the native Carib population, decided not to quarrel with the newcomers, and the French and English divided the island between themselves. Their colony was, however, attacked by the Spaniards in 1626. Most of the settlers were killed or deported, though some escaped to Nevis and others to Tortuga, where they became the first buccaneers.

The Spaniards, having destroyed the colony, withdrew, and within a very few weeks the English and French settlements had been re-established. For the next eighty years there was constant war between the two rival colonies. Twice the French drove out the British altogether, and it was not till 1702 that England acquired a complete possession that was confirmed by the Treaty of Utrecht. For the next seventy years St. Kitts shared in the general prosperity of the "sugar islands." During the American War of Independence it was however the scene of bitter fighting, but though it passed again into French possession in 1782, the prolonged and heroic defense of Brimstone Hill had the effect of detaining de Grasse and preventing him from joining the Spaniards in Havana, and indeed may claim to have served as a prelude to the Battle of the Saints.

St. Christopher's was restored to England at the Treaty of Versailles, was unaffected by the French Revolution and played little part in the Napoleonic campaigns. Brimstone Hill was heavily fortified, and the fortress is now preserved as an historic monument.

Most of the island is very mountainous, but the country round the capital, Basse Terre, has a very English look, with slowly sloping fields of sugar cane stretching to high, wooded hills, intersected with wooded valleys, its line broken here and there by a cone-shaped abandoned wind-mill and by the chimney of a modern factory. To left and right are the shapes of islands, some mere volcanic rocks, others flat stretches of green land. From the sea the fortifications of Brimstone Hill are most impressive.

Santo Domingo (the Dominican Republic). Beyond Haiti runs a high mountain range. I drove across the island from Port au Prince to Santo Domingo City. As I came down on the eastern side of the mountains I felt I was in another continent. Tangoes instead of foxtrots were being played on gramophones in every café. I felt I was in South America. Spanish was spoken everywhere. The skin of the laborers in the fields and of the men and women in the streets was considerably lighter than the Haitians'.

As has been already told, Spain lost interest in Hispaniola on discovering that there was no gold there. In 1697 the western Haitian end of the island was ceded to France, and while the French colony prospered, the fortunes of the Spanish section deteriorated so rapidly that by 1788 the total population of the island did not exceed one hundred twenty thousand. During the revolutionary period, Santo Domingo was captured by the Haitians under Toussaint L'Ouverture and Spain never regained possession.

For a time, after the French had been driven out, Haiti and Santo Domingo were united under one government, but the two peoples were too opposed by temperament and training to work together and the great barrier of mountains made a joint administration difficult. Several unsuccessful attempts were made by the Haitian presidents to subdue Santo Domingo. Finally, pressure was brought by foreign governments, particularly that of the U.S.A., who insisted that Haiti was too indebted abroad to indulge in costly military operations.

As in Haiti, revolutions at the start of the century became so frequent that the American government was forced to intervene. The military occupation was, however, brief. The Dominican Republic now has a population of one and a half million. The city of Santo Domingo is considered one of the best examples of a sixteenth century Spanish colonial town. Its cathedral is reputed to contain the tomb of Columbus.

St. John and *St. Thomas* (the Virgin Islands), two Danish settlements that were purchased by the United States in 1917. They played little part in the drama of West Indian life, though *St. Thomas* was occupied by the British in 1801-2 and 1807-15. *St. Thomas* has an excellent harbor. They are likely to rival *Reno* as divorce mills.

St. Lucia. Discovered by Columbus in 1502 and named after the day on which he sighted it. The fact that thirteen British regiments include *St. Lucia* among their battle honors testifies to the amount of fighting that took place there. Several unsuccessful attempts were made by the British to found a colony before a French settlement from *Martinique* succeeded in taking root in 1650. The English

drove the French out a little later, but the island was restored to France by the Treaty of Breda in 1667. The English continued to dispute this claim, and in 1748 the two countries agreed on its neutrality, an agreement which appears to have been disregarded. It was, anyhow, captured by Rodney in 1762, to be returned to France a year later at the Treaty of Paris. In 1775 the British recaptured it. By the spring of 1782 it was the only one of the Lesser Antilles that was still in English hands, and it was from St. Lucia that Rodney watched for de Grasse to sail out of Martinique before the Battle of the Saints. A year later, however, it was returned to France at the Treaty of Versailles.

During the next twenty years St. Lucia was to change hands five times. It was a French island at the time of the Revolution, and the National Convention in Paris conferred on it the title of "the Faithful" on account of the readiness with which it accepted revolutionary doctrines. Under the instigation of Victor Hugues, Castries was the scene of massacres as thorough as those of which Cap Haitien was the victim. Few islands were more affected by the Revolution.

During World War II it was loaned to the U.S.A. as a naval base. A very serious fire destroyed the greater part of Castries in June, 1948.

St. Martin. A small island near to and very similar to St. Barthelmy (*q.v.*) I passed it on the same trip with a very similar experience. Though English-speaking, it is half French and half Dutch. When it was decided to divide the island between the French and Dutch, a Dutchman and a Frenchman were set back to back and instructed to run in opposite directions round the island. The point at

which they met was to mark the boundary. The Dutchman ran the faster, but the smaller French part is the more fertile. The population is about ten thousand, and the chief export is salt.

St. Vincent. None of the other islands has a history at all similar. Where other islands were being occupied by French, English, Spanish and Dutch settlers, the Caribs here put up such a fierce opposition to their invaders that St. Vincent was regarded as a no-man's-land, and in 1748 was declared neutral at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Though the Caribs had repulsed their European visitors, they welcomed, at the end of the seventeenth century, a cargo of shipwrecked Negro slaves. These Africans intermarried with the Caribs and their descendants were known as black Caribs in contrast to the original red Caribs. The black Caribs, who probably strengthened the stock and certainly introduced a cause of hatred against the whites, gradually obtained supremacy over their red cousins. Whereas in the other islands the main issue through the eighteenth century was a conflict between the French and English, here in St. Vincent it was a conflict between White and Brown, and it was not till the end of the century that the Caribs were finally subdued.

During the last years they fought stubbornly against both the French and English. The first real English settlement was made in 1762, and though the French captured it in 1779, it was returned to England after the Treaty of Versailles and was in English hands at the time of the French Revolution. The Caribs ardently welcomed Victor Hugues' emissaries with incitement "to break the chains forged for them by their English tyrants," and a brigands' war broke out, as bloodthirsty and destructive as that

which had ravaged Grenada and St. Lucia. When the revolt was crushed, it was decided to deport the majority of the surviving Caribs to British Honduras.

Those who remained were wiped out in the explosion of the volcano at Soufrière in May, 1902, which erupted within a few hours of Mont Pelé and killed two thousand people.

The chief products of the island are arrowroot and sea island cotton. At the moment the island is in the black.

Tobago. A small island northeast of Trinidad which changed hands innumerable times, before finally becoming a permanent British possession in 1814. It has become increasingly popular during recent years. I have never been there myself, but everyone I know who has has been most enthusiastic. It is the island where Defoe placed the adventures of Robinson Crusoe.

Trinidad was discovered by Columbus in 1498 and remained a Spanish colony for three hundred years. It is less British than any of the other British islands and is also less West Indian, one third of the population being Asiatic, East Indian labor having been imported during the nineteenth century. It is also very prosperous, having in addition to its cocoa and sugar crops rich oil fields and the pitch lake. It also has a monopoly in the fabrication of angostura bitters.

Trinidad is immune from hurricanes and is supposed to have a regular climate. Residents, however, are dubious on this point. It has a damp, enervating heat, but there is usually a cool breeze by night.

I have twice spent a week in Trinidad, once in a hotel and once with friends. From the point of view of the tour-

ist, the island has not been improved by the lease to the U.S.A. of a naval base. The only good bathing within convenient reach of Port-of-Spain has been taken over by the military. The new bathing beach at Maracas is an hour's ride away, and the sea there is usually too rough to make bathing pleasant.

Trinidad is now an important air terminus and the atmosphere of its chief hotel in Port-of-Spain is that of a railway station, with hot, unsuitably dressed travelers hurrying about its passages and halls with their eyes upon the clock.

There are some excellent restaurants in Port-of-Spain, and Trinidad has an independent cosmopolitan existence which has been well described by Arthur Calder Marshall in *Glory Dead*. But my own opinion is that if you are not visiting friends, Trinidad is not worth going to, unless you can stay six weeks there.

There it stretches, the archipelago of the Antilles, in an arc from Florida to Venezuela, the summits of a submerged mountain range. From the decks of a ship as you see them shadowy on the horizon, the separate islands look very like each other. And when you first land, when you see the groves of coconut palms along the shore and the green valleys of sugar cane running back into the hills, and on the hillside the pale parasols of the immortelle protecting the immature cocoa plant, with the hibiscus and bougainvillea trailing over the white verandas, you are inclined to say, "Yes, but I've seen this before. St. Vincent looked very much like this."

It may have done, but you haven't quite. Were a visitor to Tahiti to make a tour of the Marquesas, he would need no special briefing. "It's the same kind of thing," he could

be told, "on a slightly smaller scale." In the West Indies that is not so. Because of their long history and the many fortunes of the Caribbean, each island is a little different from the last. That is one of the great charms of the West Indies. They have always something new to show, something new to offer you. As long as there is one island still untouched, their whole story is not yet yours.

Appendix

"TYPICAL DOMINICA"

I received the following letter from a friend in Dominica after I had passed the final proofs.

"I realise with horror that I promised to write you if the 'Columbus' company came here—well, they did come and I didn't write! Neither did I go round to Woodford Hill and watch them at their antics, which were considerable. I was a little shocked at the 'goings on' and at the untold gold which was scattered around the Northern District—fine for the Northern District, of course, but no one out here will ever believe again that England is in any financial difficulty. The Caribs made an average of \$50 per day per family, so were only too delighted to take their clothes off or do anything else anyone wanted—they don't see money like that from year's end to year's end. Every car in the district was commandeered so no private individual could travel at all. The people who catered for the sailors made fortunes, also the purveyor of Coca Cola, for every actor averaged about 5 a day, and not one of them had an opener so the beach was strewn with broken bottles. They had perfect weather and the shots they took are reported excellent, but as the conclusion everyone reached was that they would never pass the censor, all the effort is probably in vain. The galleons never came here, and as I expect you read, the Santa Maria got burned the other day."

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